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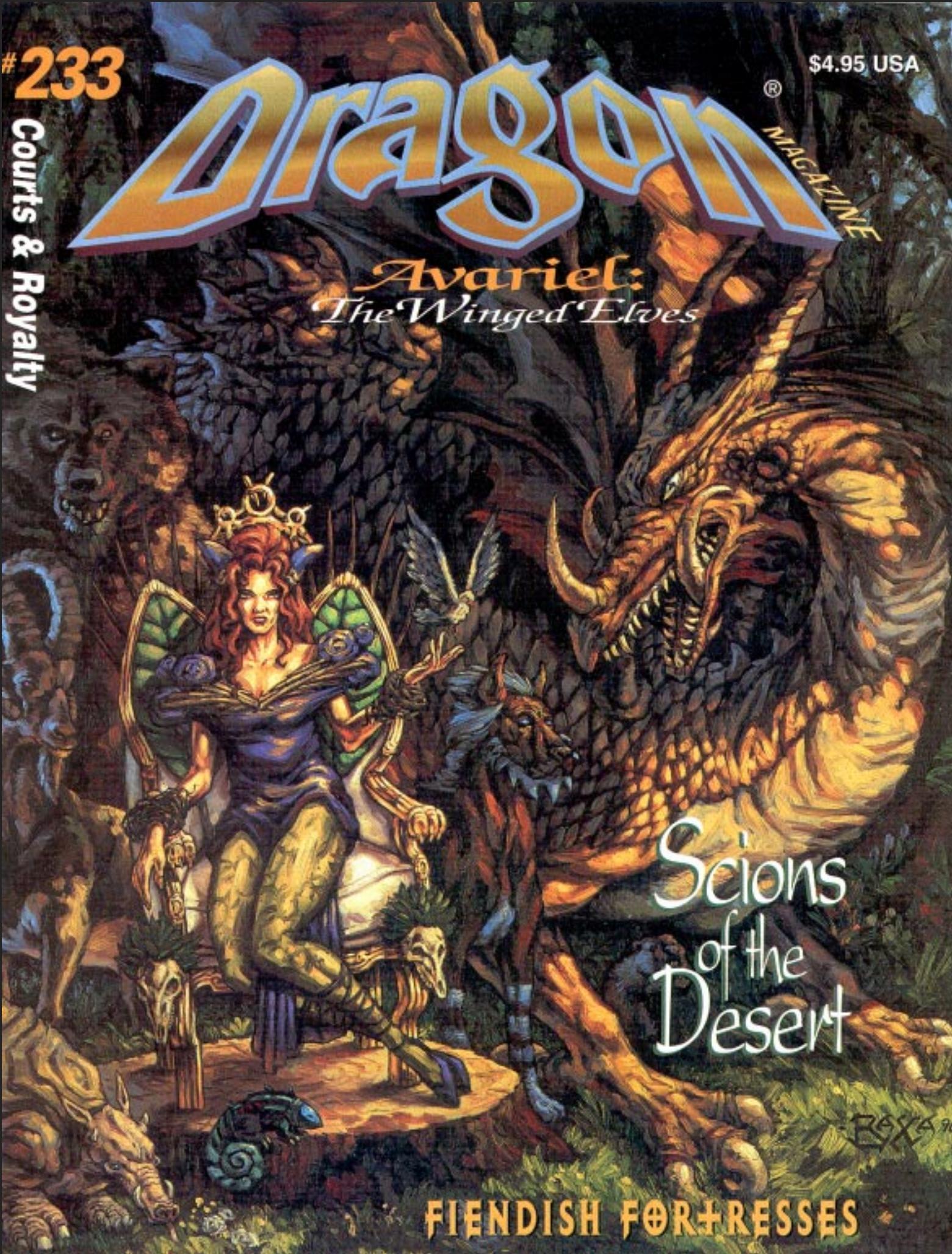
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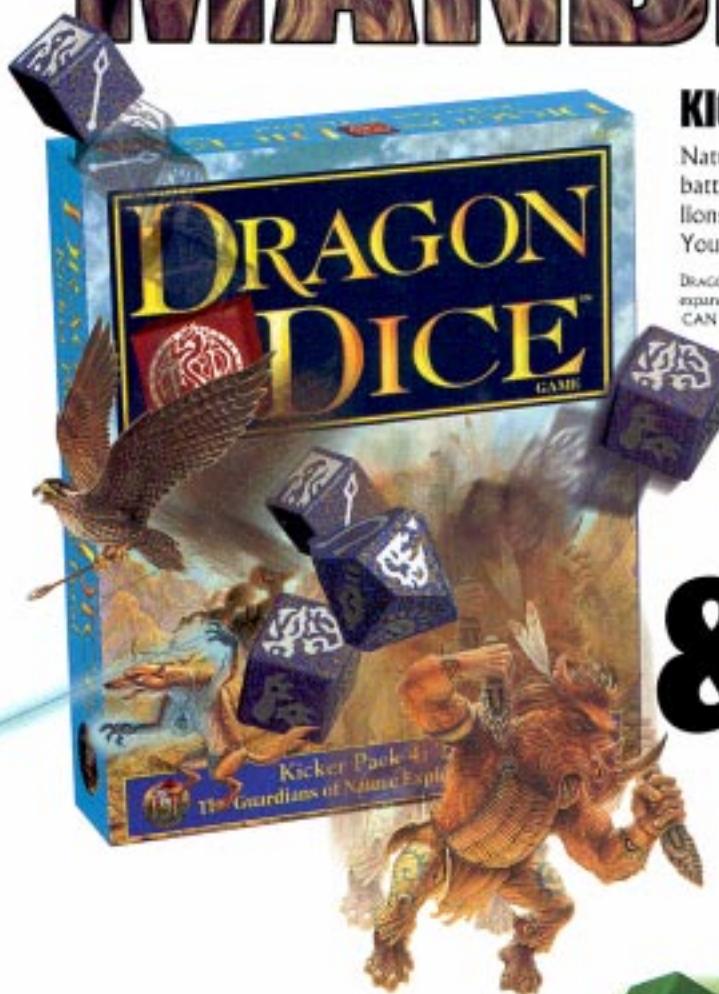
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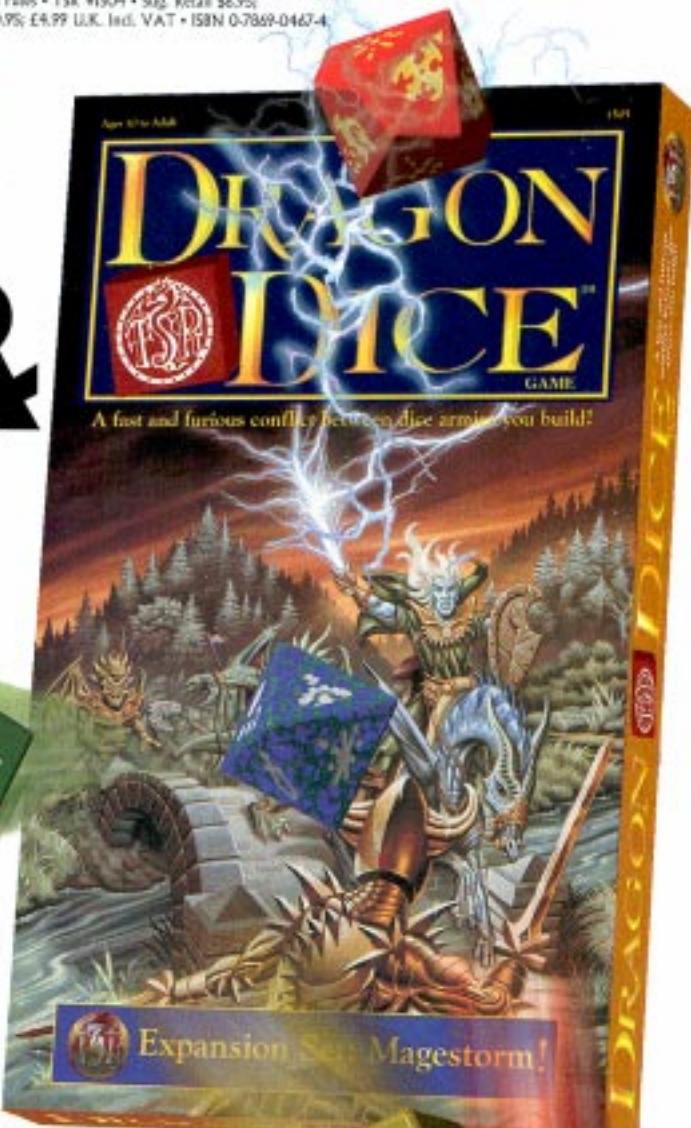


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REXS 96.



The Wyrm's Turn™

The game of kings

Chess is the first game I remember teaching myself. Checkers and board games were a breeze, but when Dad tried to teach me to play the game of kings, I failed miserably.

It wasn't Dad's fault I couldn't twig to chess. He had one of those renaissance sets in which the figures were intricate little statues. My problem was that the queens, bishops, and pawns all looked alike. The horses I had figured out, since they moved differently, but the others were confusing. Eventually, Dad's patience wore thin, and we went back to checkers, where the pieces all looked alike on purpose.

For a while I felt truly stupid. I wanted to play, and I wanted to win. Fortunately, my eight-year-old's attention span kept my agonizing brief. I didn't think about chess again until we bought the encyclopedia. Inside I found a long article that told the history of chess and gave a primer on the rules. Best of all, the icons for the pieces were clear and simple. I could tell the pawns from the bishops from the queen. I was saved!

Reading the instructions, as any gamer knows, is not always the key to learning a game. Fortunately, Dad also had a paperback copy of *Bobby Fisher Teaches Chess*. Wonderful book! It had bajillions of chess exercises, starting with the simplest and working up to the brain busters. I read that book front to back. By the time I was done, I was ready to play a real game.

It had been a few years, and I explained that I'd been in training, so Dad was game. (If you'll pardon that.) He figured I still couldn't tell a bishop from a pawn.

I won that very first game.

Of course, surprised and chagrined, Dad beat the stuffings out of me after that. He even caught me in fool's mate early on. (Bobby didn't warn me about that one!) But I learned, and soon I could beat him even when he was trying.

For the next few years, we played hundreds of games. The competition grew fierce, and I felt a cold thrill before and during every game. Sometimes I'd sit quivering with trepidation, working out four, five, or six moves in advance for each attack. It wasn't good enough to win sometimes. I wanted to win all the time.

I played at school, too. Tater Kerns was my homeroom chess nemesis. (Who'd have thought a kid named Tater could play great chess?) We worked ourselves into a furious rivalry, with boasting before and excuses after every game. Since we were so evenly matched, our years-long rivalry fired the competitive spirit in each of us. Before long, we weren't playing a game anymore — we were fighting a war.

Next I took the war to older kids and even a college chess champion, crushing their forces, rooting them out of their defenses, extending my rule by divine right. Boasts became proclamations; excuses became propaganda. I became a conquering monarch of the chess board.

It wasn't long before Dad stopped wanting to play me. It wasn't because I won all the time but because he caught me letting him win once or twice, to keep him interested. I'd become smug and terrible, not a king, but a tyrant.

It took two things to save me this time. First, I became increasingly interested in role-playing, where cooperation pays off much more than competition. I played fewer chess matches and more AD&D® sessions.

Second, a squirrelly little physics major thrashed me mercilessly, three games in a row, upon my arrival at college. Humbled and shamed, I gave up chess for almost a year.

When I did play again, I found that I didn't care as much about defeating my opponent as watching the game unfold. My hand didn't tremble as I reached for a bishop, wondering whether I was walking into a trap. The thrill of war was gone, yet I was having fun for the first time since those early games with Dad.

These days, I'm not a great chess player. (Practice makes a big, big difference.) When I do play, it's no longer a battle. Now it's just a game.

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September 1996
Volume XXI, No. 4
Issue #233



Going to Court

Larry Granato

Where etiquette is more powerful than blind-fighting, and Charisma more telling than Strength.

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The loftiest of the elves are those that soar high above the forests.

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(DRAGONLANCE®)

Tales of the Fifth Age

Douglas Niles

Centaur and plainsman alike must flee their homes as the great dragons of Krynn expand their domains.





If you have a comment, opinion, or question for the editors of DRAGON® Magazine, write us a letter. We'd love to hear from you.

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You can also send your comments via e-mail to tsrdragon@aol.com.

Dear DRAGON Magazine,

Despite the excellent work you do on every issue, I had not seen a true need to write a letter about it. However, the time has come.

The "Master Thief" article was perfect in its timing, as I am planning a series of linked adventures involving a powerful Thieves guild. Everything else was, as always, highly useful and thoroughly enjoyable.

Things I would like to see include:

1) Perhaps a bit or two about online gaming. Gaming online will never be nearly as enjoyable as the "real thing," but it is an interesting experience.

2) Something about transferring older materials, such as the Basic D&D® game, original Edition AD&D® game, Oriental Adventures, and the original Known World, to fit with 2nd Edition. There is a

whole world of exciting gaming accessories, modules, and settings out there — a world that many newer gamers will never see.

3) Perhaps a collection of favorite gaming memories. Maybe if people sent in some of their favorites, you could compile an article, or series of articles, including the best of them.

4) A feature on creating your own campaign worlds, or creating new races, classes, deities, etc. Features including new items are great, but a "How To" article might be even more helpful.

Thank you for the hours of enjoyment I have gotten from reading DRAGON Magazine.

Dave Wohlreich
2168 Briarlake Trace
Atlanta, GA 30345

Several recent letters inquired about dragon wing armor as presented in issue #230's "Dragon Dweomers." Can a PC take the armor from a defeated foe and have an armorer craft it to fit him? We asked the author for his opinion:

In order for wing armor to function for a nondraconic user, it must first be disenchanted, as wing armor is generally attuned to a particular dragon species. This can be accomplished in any number of ways, but a Mordenkainen's disjunction spell is the surest method.

Next, the "fabric" must be tailored to fit the new user, as it is assumed that he is considerably smaller than a dragon. Finally, the wing armor must be re-enchanted, attuning it to the new user's species.

Note that, even if the size conversion is successful, one must consider the type of wings the wearer has. Generally speaking, the wearer's wings must be akin to a dragon's (i.e., batlike, not feathered). This is because draconic wings operate more like a pair of sails; the presence of wing armor is like having thicker sails. The feathers of avian wings play an important role during flight, so wing armor could actually hamper the effectiveness of avian wings. Wing armor might work on gossamer wings,

but those seem too fragile; just slipping on a set of wing armor could very well damage such wings. In any event, the specifics are up to the DM.

With regards to Armor Class, wing armor does not reduce the wearer's AC. If a flying creature loses 50% of its total hp, it can no longer remain aloft and must land immediately. (See Chapter 9 of the DMG.) A DM might also rule that when a flying creature loses 25% of its total hit points, it cannot perform complex aerial maneuvers and attack forms. Instead of altering a creature's AC, wing armor increases these percentages by 25%. Thus, a flying creature can withstand the loss of 50% of its hp before losing its ability to perform complex maneuvers, and 75% of its hp before being forced to land.

In any case, a captured suit of wing armor can be used as a model on which smaller-sized versions could be manufactured. In fact, it would be logical to assume that any spell-casting winged race could create similar protection or commission if they cannot make it themselves. Wing armor of any sort should not function with artificial wings, such as those produced by a cloak of the bat or wings of flying, or spells that create temporary wings.

Robert S. Mullin
Perkasie, PA

Dear DRAGON Magazine,

I wanted to express how much I enjoyed the editorial in issue #231, "Remember When." This was an essay I could really relate to. Although I missed the *X-Files* episode it mentioned, it did remind me of the movie *Airheads*, where a similar comment was made about the AD&D game. In the scene, one of the characters was trying to point out that he was once a geek, and he used the fact that he used to play DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® to illustrate his point.

As your editorial mentioned, we have come a long way to defeat this stereotype, but for many people, this image sticks with them. I think back and wonder how this concept of gamers came about. Most of the people I know who play

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RPG's are family men with respectable careers. I think this idea of gamers develops primarily during teenage years. Roleplaying is an intellectual activity, and most kids who spend time in mind exercising hobbies are labeled geeks.

However, I think this aspect of the game helps to close the generation gap. My gaming group consists of a wide age range. I have played D&D for 16 years now, which is actually longer than some of our group members have been alive. Just as your article suggested, when the veterans talk about classics like *Keep on the Borderlands*, we sometimes get blank looks from the younger players. But this does not prevent the younger players from coming up with some of the best gaming ideas and solutions.

Steve Bartell
Orem, UT

Dear *DRAGON Magazine*,

I just wanted to thank you for sending me the marvelous coaster with my latest issue of *DRAGON Magazine*. In a fit of pride, I couldn't resist showing it to all my Windows-using friends. You would not believe how bitterly despondent they became, since they had received only the AD&D Core Rules CD-ROM, instead of the more useful coaster.

So, in the interests of fairness, I must inquire on their behalf if you plan to release coasters for the Windows folks (in the form, of course, of Mac CDs). As a long-time gamer and a loyal *DRAGON Magazine* subscriber, I think it only fair. Once again, thank you for the coaster. I have already put it to good use.

Phil
Via e-mail

Thanks for what is far and away the most pleasant letter we've received on this subject, Phil. The reason that the CD-ROM is for Windows is that so many more people use Windows and Windows 95 than other platforms. If the demand becomes strong enough to produce a Mac version, you'll read about it here first.

In the meantime, keep those maps and character sheets safe with that handy coaster.

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Dear *DRAGON Magazine*,

I just wanted to let you know that I have yet to write fan-mail to anyone or anything. This is my first such letter (thanks to e-mail and the internet).

I just wanted to know what kind of software (and hardware too for that matter) you use for the design, and publication of your magazine? My guess was Pagemaker. I also wanted to know if the publication of *DRAGON Magazine* is a full-time job done by one person or what? As publisher of my school's newspaper, I really enjoy desktop publishing but have never heard about it from someone who is involved with a "serious publication" (one that makes money).

I was also wondering if there was any way that I might contribute to DRAGON in some way, with an article or a set of magical items, or whatever.

Thanks for your time,

Kent Dezendorf
Via e-mail

PS. I was wondering if there were any way of getting some earlier issues of DRAGON Magazine. I have a few older ones, and there are no more RPG bookstores in my area.

We perform most of the work on DRAGON Magazine and DUNGEON Adventures in Quark Xpress, though we use a variety of word processors (both IBM and Mac) and graphics software to make it all come together. It takes our entire team (see the masthead for the roster) to produce both magazines.

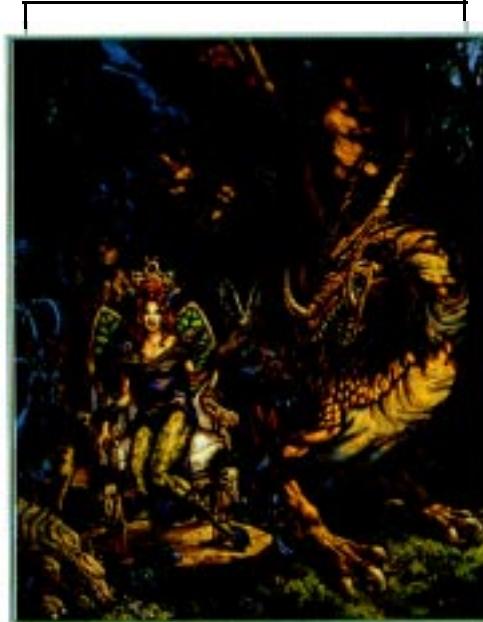
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On the Cover

Tom Baxa, an artist who rarely falls back on cliched images, was quick to use our cover assignment to remind us that royalty can hold court just about anywhere they please. The wide variety of AD&D® game worlds presents virtually endless possibilities for the creative DM in designing courts.

Tom's painting has evolved over the past few years into a very personal vision (a surprising move for someone who hasn't changed his answering machine message in over five years). When I first started working with Tom, he was producing exclusively black & white interior illustrations for us. It has been a pleasure to watch his development. In spite of all the (good natured) ribbing I give him, I'm proud to present his work on our latest cover.

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Lubov.

Making friends and influencing people

GOING TO COURT

by Larry Granato

illustrated by Lubov

Lord Chumley's attention was drawn toward a commotion at the door to the royal ballroom.

"I want to see the king!" grunted a mighty-thewed barbarian.

"Do you have an appointment?" droned the major-domo.

"No," thundered the warrior, "but isn't he holding court right now? I've thrown around plenty of gold just to get in here. I'm an important guy!"

"Really? Today's court function is not open to the... public," answered the major-domo, looking askance at the sweaty figure. "Would you like to make an appointment?"

"To see the king?"

"Of course not. To see the Lord Chamberlain, who decides who sees his Highness."

"Ok. Where's the Chamberlain?" the fighter replied.

"Actually, you must see his secretary about the appointment."

"Well, where can I find him?" the warrior asked, gritting his teeth.

The servitor smiled slightly. "You must first talk to the secretary's appointment clerk."

The barbarian began to emit a low growl. Chumley suddenly recognized him as one of the heroes who accomplished the nearly impossible task of recovering the Saber of Sublime Faith from the demi-dark lord. He stepped forward.

"My good man, if I may have a word with you?"

"Huh?"

The well-dressed aristocrat lowered his voice. "You see that tall fellow over there? He's the King's favorite cousin. If I talk with him, I can get you an audience tonight"

"Great! I've got something important I want to tell the King."

"Naturally. Now, perhaps there's something you can do for me..."

The court of a ruler is a center not only for government but also for politics, art, entertainment, social activity, and of course intrigue. Although it doesn't seem like a place for adventurers — not many monsters — there's great potential for interesting endeavors at court. Also, as PCs grow in fame, they'll be noticed by the high and mighty and could be required to attend court, even if they'd rather be hacking dragons. Defying the wishes of the king can be far worse than facing a few fire-breathing horrors.

Even if the PCs aren't interested in political adventures, they could visit court:

- ❖ to get the latest news and rumors.
- ❖ to become friends with VIPs who can help them out.
- ❖ to meet sages, mages, and priests with knowledge of treasures, monsters, and magic.
- ❖ to acquire preferments, documents, and recognition that allows them to travel without hassles.
- ❖ to find patrons, loans, and assistance for tasks like castle-building and running businesses.
- ❖ to meet talented NPCs who may be available as followers.

Performing all of these activities could take years of random encounters, travel, and searching, but they are usually available at court.

The Ruler

The ruler, a court's *raison d'être*, can be a king, emperor, duke, khan, or other sovereign leader. The personality of the ruler is the foremost influence on the court itself.

The DM should play rulers differently than other NPCs. This is a character worthy of complexity, subtlety, and development. Rulers should have a calm, regal bearing. To add to the sense of mystery and majesty, the ruler should rarely be seen by the PCs. What they hear about him should most often come from NPCs.



The court

The court is composed of the ruler, his family, courtiers, visitors, and an array of servants and soldiers. The royal relatives are the most prominent persons after the ruler himself. Of these, the heir is the most notable, although the ruler's consort is also important. While the ruler's kinsmen often hold government positions, friction in the family may decree that some are kept from power.

Courtiers include officials of the government and officers of the royal household, plus knights and nobles who owe fealty to the ruler. Every important noble is expected to appear at court occasionally, and many spend most of their time there. There are many young people; aristocrats send their offspring to court to obtain an education and to learn courtly graces.

Visitors range from VIPs such as religious leaders, foreign princes, ambassadors, famous knights, and scholars, down to ordinary people who have business at court, like merchants who provide supplies. Servants and soldiers consist not only of the ruler's men but also of the entourages of all his courtiers and visitors. The court's size varies from hundreds to thousands. (Louis XIV's very large court at Versailles numbered about 10,000.)

Precedence

Precedence is the customary ranking of nobles. It determines the arrangements for all formal occasions, what bow or salute must be made, what kind of chair one sits upon, and so on. Within each category, there are also degrees of seniority.

The ruler comes first in precedence, followed by his heir, his consort, his other legitimate children, his parents, the heir's consort and children, other close relatives and illegitimate offspring, more distant relatives, the highest ranking nobles and visiting foreign princes, high ranked nobles and top officials, great knights, mid-level ranked nobles, lesser nobles and elite knights, magnates, minor nobles, knights, squires, gentlemen, and commoners.

Influence

Even if they do not already have a place in the court, PCs may gain influence they can use to gain favors from NPCs. Influence is rated on a scale of zero to ten for each character.

Table 1: Influence levels

Influence	Description
0	Unknown
1	Recognized
2-3	Well-known
4-7	Admired
8-9	Favored courtier
10	Has the ruler's ear

New members of the court normally start with an influence of zero, but the DM may choose to determine a higher starting influence for PCs who have exceptional social status, precedence, titles, offices, wealth, ownership of palaces and castles, military victories, charity, family connections, or reputation. (One's reputation is not the only thing to precede him to court.) In any event, no PC who has not yet interacted with the court may have an influence higher than 3 at the start. The DM should not tell the player his PC's influence level but track it privately.

Influence gives favorable reaction roll modifiers, based on the influence of the PC vs. the NPC. As long as the PC has some influence (a score of 1 or greater), he gains a +1 bonus. As he grows more influential among the court, his bonus becomes greater depending on whose support he must gain. When a PC with influence interacts with an NPC with influence, check the difference between their influence scores for the reaction bonus:

Table 2: Influence reaction bonuses

PC vs. NPC influence	Reaction Modifier
3 or more lower	+1
1-2 lower	+2
equal	+3
1-2 higher	+4
3-4 higher	+5
5 or more higher	+6

Encounter reactions should be rolled on Table 59 of the DMG. A result of "Friendly" earns the PC the favor for which he has asked. If the roll just meets the friendly result, the PC gains only a small favor. Results exceeding the minimum by 3 or more earn exceptional favors.

Example: A PC with a Charisma score of 12 (no bonus) and an influence of 4 asks an NPC courtier with an influence of 6 to support his request for a land grant from the ruler. The DM compares the influence scores (4 - 6 = -2) to determine the reaction modifier (+2) from Table 2 of this article. After a roll of

9 on Table 59 in the DMG, the modified result is a 7 - just barely friendly. The NPC may offer the PC grudging or lukewarm support. Had the DM rolled a natural 7 or lower, the NPC might offer enthusiastic support or even share a bit of pertinent gossip to help the PC persuade the ruler.

Role-playing is crucial in determining NPC reactions, and the DM should not let modifiers overrule bad manners. An NPC can grant only favors that are his to give; the gardener can't arrange tea with the queen mother. The ideas on influence levels and impressions aren't meant to shackle gamers to a rigid system but to provide guidelines. They can be modified as needed.

Favors

Favors can be used in many ways. Jobs can be hastened or given special consideration. Extraordinary requests can be made. Favors can find people jobs, help them out of trouble, gain audiences, acquire privileged information, affect the outcome of trials, and help PC's deal with the intricacies of courts and government.

Favors can also be used negatively, by cancelling favors used by others. Examples of favors can be found in "Boons and Benefits" (*DRAGON Magazine* #219).

Being introduced to the court

When a character wishes to go to court, he must be introduced. A PC who has performed a notable deed might receive an invitation or summons. Otherwise, he must have a patron at court to introduce him. Only someone of considerable influence (at least 3) may act as a patron. Low-ranking nobles (Influence 0-2) are permitted at court only once a year, when they present their respects to the ruler; they can't bring friends along. The NPC who introduces the PC is doing him a favor. Naturally, the PC is expected to reciprocate with a later favor. Everything the PC does reflects on his patron.

A day at court

It's a courtier's duty to wait on the ruler. He must be ready before the ruler even wakes up. Few courtiers are permitted to live in the royal palace, so a PC has to travel from his own home. Someone at court always notices a PC's lateness and untidiness.

Although it seems that a PC at court could talk to the ruler or his ministers

any time, this is not the case. They have full schedules and don't idly chat with anyone hanging around in hallways.

A courtier spends most of his time with his patron, overlord, or members of his clique. When in the ruler's presence, courtiers are grouped according to rank, and newcomers are stuck in the back.

The most favored courtiers are allowed to assist the ruler with both state and mundane business. It's a great honor to attend the ruler personally, even if it means holding his coat or serving his dinner. For one thing, it allows someone to murmur a remark in the royal ear.

Once the ruler is up, he instructs the court on his agenda for the day. Court moves to a large hall, with only the ruler permitted to sit. A court announcer regulates protocol, proclaiming visitors or activities. Polite discussion is the most common activity, although some may sneak off to a side room for carousing or gaming. The ruler comes and goes about the palace, accompanied by his senior advisors. Lesser courtiers might have to remain waiting for hours before an audience, or they might be dismissed until a later date. Sometimes the whole court follows the ruler as he makes his rounds.

Mealtimes are stately affairs. Formal meals are eaten in a grand dining hall. It is considered very bad manners to excuse oneself for nearly any reason. Kings have heavy responsibilities and often want a break from governing. Some rulers don't permit "serious" conversation during meals or other social occasions. If the monarch or his snitches overhear courtiers "talking shop," there will be reprimands.

Part of the day is filled with government business. The sovereign listens to reports, signs documents, and executes other routine business. PCs with official positions are expected to provide information relating to their jobs. Another portion of the day consists of private audiences. Most rulers spend some time making religious devotions. PCs belonging to the same sect as the ruler will find attendance at chapel mandatory. Family and personal affairs are sure to occupy some of the ruler's attention especially if the royal family is large or contentious.

The rest of the day will be filled as the ruler desires. Gambling and gaming are very common interests, especially for courtiers. Some rulers have a favorite pastime in which they indulge frequently, often on a daily basis. This sets the tone for the court: is the ruler an avid hunter,

does he spend his time discussing theology, or will he demand to be entertained? The Court Activity Table (on page 12) can be used on a weekly basis to see what major event is occurring. These activities give the PC a chance to make impressions and enhance his influence.

Making an impression

If a PC makes sufficient impressions, he is acclaimed and temporarily gains more influence. In the ever-changing atmosphere of the court, impressions do not last long — about a month at best. If a PC raises his influence by two points or more for two consecutive months, then he receives a permanent increase of one level. The number of impressions needed to increase one's influence is equal to the PC's current influence. Thus, as the PC becomes better known at court, it becomes increasingly difficult for him to increase his influence.

A PC makes an impression by making a proficiency roll for the skill that corresponds with the current court activity, or by appropriate role-playing for other endeavors. Failure means the PC has blundered (see below).

Competition

There are many people vying for attention at court and the DM must determine the number of competitors and their level of proficiency. For example, a PC showing off his singing ability may make a successful proficiency check, but if an NPC rolls higher without failing, the NPC makes the impression instead.

Interference

Competitors may not only try to beat a rival's proficiency rolls but also try to modify them by interfering with the character's actions. An NPC may affect a PC, or vice versa. For example, a contender could stick his foot out as a PC performs some fancy dance steps. The interferer must make an appropriate proficiency or ability check (in this case, a dancing proficiency check or a Dexterity check). If successful, the interference causes the victim a penalty of up to +6 to the proficiency check (a +1 penalty for each point rolled under his interference check). An unsuccessful check on the part of the interfering character means his action is spotted; this is a blunder.

Blunders

Stepping on the grand duchess's toes or failing to bow to the ruler before din-

ner are just two of the many blunders one might commit. The ever present gossips spread word of the gaffe, and the character is ridiculed throughout the court. A blunder is the opposite of an impression — it lowers influence. It takes only two blunders to reduce influence one level. The decrease lasts for two months, but if the PC blunders again during that time, it lasts for three months, and the PC suffers a permanent loss of one point of influence.

There's also the possibility of committing a major blunder. Major blunders include botching some important task, displeasing the ruler, or anything considered insulting to the sovereign. A major blunder reduces the PC's influence to zero until he returns to the ruler's good graces. The PC in disfavor may be banished.

One step below disfavor is disgrace. This strips the PC of his rank, titles, and offices until he performs some heroic deed. Disgrace is usually inflicted only for dishonorable or cowardly acts. More severe punishments include exile or imprisonment. Exiles are sent into foreign lands, and their properties are confiscated. High-ranking prisoners are usually treated well, but they are always closely guarded. This varies with the political situation, and it's not unknown for them to be killed quietly after a few short years in confinement.

Cover-ups

Characters who commit blunders can try to cover them up. The DM decides what proficiencies and role-playing actions may disguise the blunder. One might try to persuade, bribe, or intimidate witnesses; destroy, lose, or forge documents. Blunders that occur in public cannot be covered up but may be overcome. For example, a PC who trips over his sword during a parade may try to turn his fall into a graceful somersault. A PC who overcomes a public blunder makes an impression instead.

A successful cover-up cancels a blunder, while the failure of a cover-up counts as two blunders.

Other ways to make an impressions

Other methods of making impressions include participating in the ruler's favorite activity and socializing with NPCs of high social status. If the NPC's influence exceeds the PC's by 4 or more, an impression is made. If the NPC has extraordinary influence (8-10), two impressions

Court activities table

The DM should roll 1d100 each week to determine the main court activity available for PCs who hope to make an impression — or who plan to interfere with someone else's attempt.

01-05	Ball, masquerade, or party
06-10	Banquet or feast
11-19	Ceremony
20-23	Commission or investigation
24-28	Concert, performance or entertainment
29-31	Embassy, parley, or delegation
32-35	Holiday or religious festival
36-43	Hunting or falconry
44-48	Inner council meeting
49-53	Open court, petitions, and appeals
54-57	Paperwork
58-59	Parliament or great council
60-66	Private audience or interview
67-70	Procession, parade, spectacle, display, or pageant
71-72	Progression or change court
73-75	Public appearance, opening, dedication, or inspection
76-79	Reception, presentation, demonstration, or report
80-84	Sports and contests
85-89	Tournament, joust, or melee
90-91	Trial or judgment
92-96	No major activity (usually, just gambling & gossiping)
97-00	Uproar

are made. It takes many favors to be seen with such a prominent individual.

Associating with inferiors lowers influence. If a PC is seen with someone in disfavor or very low rank (0 influence and of low social class), it's a blunder.

Role-playing can provide other opportunities for making impressions. The court is especially fond of witty remarks, clever put-downs, and sage advice. Heroic

deeds, triumphs over enemies, and daring rescues are also good prospects.

Court activities

Court activities occur on a weekly basis. The following descriptions include references to the proficiencies most likely to make a good impression, when successful.

Ball, masquerade, or party

Court balls are much more elegant than the tavern chug-a-lugs some characters are used to. Any of the following proficiencies may be used to see if a PC can make an impression: dancing, singing, musical instrument, oratory.

Banquet or feast

Fine dining is the hallmark of a refined court. Cooking and oratory proficiencies may be used to make an impression. A PC can chat only with persons sitting nearby, and seating depends on precedence.

Ceremonies

Ceremonies are ubiquitous at court. They include knighting, marriages, accepting vassals, making vows, attending religious observances, bestowing awards, assigning offices, opening parliament, granting charters, signing treaties, etc. A PC may be a participant or an organizer. A participant must make an etiquette roll to carry out his part of the ceremony. He may make an additional roll for an impression.

The organizer must make three etiquette rolls. The DM may impose modifiers based on the complexity of the formalities (from a -1 bonus for a simple ceremony to a +4 penalty for the most elaborate of affairs). Two failed rolls indicates a blunder; three failures means a fiasco, and the PC is banished.

Commission or investigation

Commissions and investigations include three possibilities. The PC may be appointed to a committee carrying out a public inquiry, he may be given a commission to undertake some private investigation, or he may come under scrutiny himself. Most committees perform only nominal work. Occasionally some are sent out to rectify a problem, and the members are given an entourage and royal writs authorizing them to deal with the situation. A special commission sends the PC on a confidential mission. This could be anything from foreign spying to checking up on a noble's loyalty. As tar-

get of a probe, the PC is suspected of suspicious activity. He can avoid a blunder by clearing his name.

Concerts, performances, or entertainment

Rulers desire quality entertainment. The PC may be a performer, a sponsor, or a spectator.

A performer must make two proficiency rolls in singing, musical instruments, juggling, or other appropriate category. If he fails both, he blunders. If he makes both, a favorable reaction from the ruler makes an impression. One success and one failure indicate an ambivalent response (neither an impression nor a blunder).

As a sponsor, the PC hires a group of entertainers. Three proficiency checks are made. Three failures means the ruler is offended and the PC is banished. Two failures indicate a blunder. A single failure incurs no penalty but gains no impression. If all checks succeed, a friendly reaction roll from the ruler (including modifiers for the PC's current influence) scores an impression.

As a spectator, the PC may attempt to make an impression by giving his opinion on the performance. The DM should secretly determine whether the ruler enjoyed the performances. In most cases, a successful proficiency check or two by the performers should indicate that the ruler enjoyed the performance. Rulers are notoriously fickle in their tastes, however, so there may be other factors, such as the subject matter of the performance, the ruler's current mood, etc.

If the PC agrees with the ruler's opinion of the show and says so eloquently (by making a successful etiquette proficiency check), he makes an impression. If the PC agrees, but the ruler liked a bad show or disliked a good one, he makes no impression — everyone else knows he's being agreeable to please the ruler. If the PC disagrees with the ruler and chose the "wrong" opinion, it's a blunder. If he disagrees and he's right, people secretly admire him for his courage, but he still doesn't make an impression.

Embassy, parley, or delegation

Foreign relations are a matter of vital national interest. Permanent embassies are uncommon, so the arrival of a new ambassador is a momentous occasion. Courtiers want to find out as much as possible about the envoy, his aims, his strengths, and contacts (intelligence-gathering is part of a diplomat's job).

Negotiations are usually carried out in small meetings over a period of months. Delegations from important domestic groups may also appear in court. An impression is made by the PC who gathers the most information, subverts an enemy spy, gains the best deal while negotiating, etc.

Gambling

Gambling with cards and dice are popular activities at court. Wagers are required (10-40 gp minimum), and thousands of gold pieces can ride on a single bet. Use the gaming NWP, but there will be 2-5 opponents to roll against, and some will be very proficient gamblers. PCs who are regular big-time winners make an impression.

Gaming

Playing games, such as chess, checkers, or backgammon are favorite pastimes at court. Use the gaming NWP to determine the winner. However, an opponent may be a bad loser. Bad losers will do anything to win, including distracting their opponent by coughing, humming, idle chatter, etc. The PC must make a Wisdom check for each distraction. For each failure, add one to his proficiency roll (to a maximum penalty of four). A PC who defeats a ruler who is a bad loser incurs disfavor.

Consistent winners make an impression, but poor losers never do.

Holiday or religious festival

Holidays are a time for enjoyment and festivities. The court is relaxed; normal rivalries are suspended. It is a time for reconciliation, marriage arrangements, and other cheerful business. A PC who is irreligious or makes fun of the holiday commits a blunder.

Hunting or falconry

Hunting is a favorite outdoor activity. Rulers usually maintain vast tracts of hunting grounds. A PC on a hunt must make a hunting proficiency check to avoid a mishap (accidents are common). If the check is successful, the PC is has preformed adequately. He may make another check at a -2 to -7 penalty, depending on the hunt's difficulty, to attempt a display of huntsmanship that makes an impression.

Inner council meeting

The ruler and his advisors gather to set policy. It requires many favors to get a

New nonweapon proficiencies				
Proficiency	Slots required	Relevant ability	Check	modifier
Bureaucracy	1	Intelligence	0	
Law	2	Intelligence	+2	
Oratory	1	Charisma	0	

Bureaucracy. The character understands the workings of governmental administration. The PC knows how to get information, what documents are needed, how to find out who's in charge, etc. Read/write NWP is required.

Law. The character is knowledgeable about the laws of a particular country. If he's permitted to practice law, he may draft legal documents, handle lawsuits,

give legal advice, and present arguments before a court. Read/write NWP is necessary.

Oratory. Oratory, or rhetoric, is the art of speech-making, persuasion and debate. A PC uses oratory to gain favorable reaction modifiers in non-combat situations. An eloquent speaker tries to influence listeners' opinions; he does not ask for favors.

PC's proposal on the agenda. If the idea is accepted and successful, the PC makes an impression; if it fails, he blunders.

Open court, petitions, and appeals

Open court allows ordinary persons to present grievances or requests to the ruler. This is done in the form of written petitions, as the ruler doesn't have time to converse with every petitioner. Appeals are pleas to change previous decisions.

A PC can use open court to present his entreaty. Favors determine whether the petition is actually read or just filed, and what leverage is brought on the final determination.

Paperwork

The PC is required to perform administrative paperwork. It could be anything from taking an inventory to writing a report on cheesemaking in the Southern Dales. Usually it is the preparation and circulation of documents relating to the PC's court assignment. If he has none, then it's a job that no one else wants.

The reading/writing or bureaucracy nonweapon proficiencies can be used. A good job rarely makes an impression, but a sloppy effort causes a blunder. Interesting information may turn up while perusing archives.

Parliament or great council

A parliament is an assembly of nobles and commoners for the purpose of considering legislation proposed by the ruler, or settling other important concerns. Parliaments are called only when necessary. Alternatively, there may be a major council on religious, commercial, or other issues. A noble PC

is seated in the upper house of parliament. Non-noble PCs, including knights and gentry, may choose to run in an election for the lower house, as a representative of their home town. Parliaments provide opportunities for all types of politicking. There is usually tension between the legislators and the sovereign, as parliament concentrates powerful leaders into a group whose prerogatives cannot be denied.

Private audience or interview

The ruler holds a private meeting. Favors can be used to get the PC mentioned. Many favors might actually get the PC an audience. An alternative is a royal interview, where the ruler questions a PC to make a personal determination on his caliber and loyalty.

Procession, parade, spectacle, display, or pageant

This event is a combination of public ceremonies and entertainment (lasts 1-4 days). A PC taking part must make an etiquette roll and another proficiency check (DM's choice). Organizers make three rolls (see Ceremonies).

Progression or move court

A progression is a grand royal tour that travels across the country, allowing the public to see the ruler and the ruler to check up on the provincials. The entourage stays at the castle of the local lord. Supplies are requisitioned from the surrounding area, so everyone hopes the PCs will move on quickly. Rulers may also move their court seasonally. The DM must determine which and how

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The avariel On Wings of Eagles

by James Estes

illustrated by Tom Baxa

My host's strong arms supporting me through the flight, I finally saw what his keen eagle eyes no doubt caught long ago: the aerie-city of Myrravin, its graceful spires reaching upward, bright pennants puttering, its skies filled with the joyous beating of avariel wings. Enraptured, I finally found the home I was taken from so long ago, born as I was without the wings of my forebears.

The Complete Book of Elves introduces the avariel, a winged sub-race of elves. However, the avariel stand somewhat apart from the rest of elven society. Little is known of these winged elves, due to both their relative inaccessibility and their reclusive behavior. While they do maintain some measure of contact with other races — typically other elves — they are often an invisible feature of the elven world. Rare is the avariel who leaves his society to journey among the wingless, and equally rare are the avariel who allow strangers into any of their aerie-cities.

Here is an overview of the avariel, their culture and lifestyle, and options for introducing them as PCs or NPCs into any AD&D® campaign. Myrravin, an avariel aerie-city, can be placed in most of the AD&D worlds. While the avariel can fit in any setting, from the GREYHAWK® setting to the DARK SUN® campaign, the descriptions that follow are geared more toward the worlds of Oerth, Ktynn, Toril, or the MYSTARA® setting. Winged elves in the RAVENLOFT® setting or on Athas should be even more rare, if they appear at all.

The winged ones

My lot in life is a particularly sad one: although an avariel myself, I was one of the cursed few born without wings. My parents, saddened though they were to give me up, realized the disadvantage I would have trying to operate wingless in a winged society. Soon after my birth they arranged for me to be adopted by a High Elven couple, themselves childless, with the provision that upon reaching adulthood I would learn of my true heritage.

Though I was raised ignorant of my blood, I was still controlled by it. My physiology, despite my winglessness, was one of the avariel. I was lighter-boned than my peers, and my chest, back, and shoulders were noticeably broader — designed by nature to carry wings. My vision, like that of all my kin, was quite acute. Even my psychology was marked by this blood: I was ever fascinated with the heavens and would spend hours looking skyward, to satisfy some indescribable longing. When my foster parents finally taught me of my birthright, so many unarticulated questions were answered. I immediately began my quest for Myrravin, the city of my birth, although none in my community seemed to know where it was located. Regardless of such obstacles, I vowed that I would not rest until I set foot upon my birthplace.

The avariel are certainly one of the most physiologically unique sub-races of elves; while the biological differences between grey, high, and sylvan elves are cosmetic at best, the avariel, like the drow and the sea elves, truly stand apart from their kin. As can be expected, many of their cultural variances are actually attributable to their physiology.

The avariel are possessed of an almost ethereal beauty. Their wings, often quite majestic, are usually white, although some avariel are born with plumage that ranges from light gray to black. Avariel features are even more exquisite than those of the already beautiful elven peoples, with slightly larger eyes, and white or black hair.

The avariel are not merely "elves with wings": their entire body has been developed to accommodate flight. Their torso is typically larger and stronger than that of their elvish brethren, designed as it is to bear wings. Furthermore, their skeletal structure, composed of light and hollow bones, helps reduce the burden of their weight while aloft. When in the air, they tend to be quite fast, mobile, and agile, due both to their lighter weight and to their graceful flight. On the ground, however, they are almost burdened by their wings, sometimes appearing clumsy.



Myrravin, the aerie-city

So much of my quest seemed fruitless, one failure after another. Many clues led to nothing, and I seemed to find only obstacles. The avariel, I have learned, are a private folk and do not leave roadmaps to their cities. After many adventures and seemingly endless travel, I managed to find representatives of the avariel on a diplomatic mission. I was stunned to see true avariel in their winged glory, wrapped in short, loose-fitting tunics and togas of the purest white. They knew my origins immediately upon seeing me, and they welcomed me as one of their own. I felt their pity immediately, but I was overcome with joy at finally seeing true avariel; we spent what seemed like an eternity in silent sharing, with me caressing their delicate plumage. When we spoke, I learned of their aerie-city, Myrravin, and they agreed to take me there. Apparently they felt that although raised away from my own kind, I was still avariel and should be welcome.

When I was finally taken to Myrravin, borne aloft in the arms of my lost kin, I was amazed at the sight before me. The avariel develop their homes high in the mountains, in places otherwise inaccessible. Their geographic isolation inevitably leads to cultural and psychological isolation, and they have become a reclusive people. Their communities typically develop around one central city, usually constructed high atop a plateau, with structures built into or alongside neighboring crags and peaks. Although the avariel dislike being underground, they will build — and even, tunnel — into the sides of cliffs; such structures, however, tend to have windows, balconies or perches. These communities, essentially city-states, are often impossible to reach through any method other than flight. Some aerie-cities are built with a single road leading down the mountain, but this road is usually on a cliff-side so that it can be constantly monitored (and invaders upon it attacked) by wingborne patrols.

Myrravin is one of the oldest avariel cities. It is certainly the oldest occupied avariel community, with a history stretching back over millennia. Myrravin itself is similar to other aerie-cities, the majority of its urban development built atop a large, flat plateau. It sprawls on the highest peak in its area, overlooking many smaller peaks and structures. Myrravin's urban planning is representative of typical avariel cities, with many open plazas, sparkling fountains, and tall pinnacles.

In the very center of Myrravin is a grand Plaza, with a raised dais as its

focus. The plaza is typically one of the busiest places of Myrravin; during the day, countless stalls and shops line the perimeter, offering a variety of services and goods. The plaza is often cleared for religious or civic services, when the majority of Myrravin's population can gather within the plaza or atop the terraces and roofs of neighboring buildings.

Avariel buildings are built with a focus on both width — a narrow chamber is confining to the winged ones — and height. Avariel buildings are also strong on windows, terraces, porches and balconies. Very few roofs are gabled or peaked; typically the roof of a building also acts as an observation deck.

As the oldest known inhabited city, Myrravin has often served as the model for a host of other avariel aerie-cities. It should be noted, though, that ruins of other aerie-cities have been found, and scholars have posited that some of these cities might even be older than Myrravin. Such ruins are dangerous, often inhabited by creatures who have taken it for their lairs, while crumbling architectures provide yet another threat. Some avariel like to travel to these various ruins, either to explore what might be part of their past or for the adventure that lies wherein. Avariel scholars have occasionally arranged expeditions to such cities, but these do not always meet with success.

Avariel communities

Immediately upon my arrival at Myrravin, I was formally introduced to the city's ruling council, which was governed by a poet named Lessandra. From my observations, it appears that the avariel have an egalitarian society, with equal accord afforded to male and female. My welcome was warm, and I was invited to stay in the city as long as I desired. I was assured that my search for my true parents would be assisted by Myrravin's historians; it would appear that I was not the only wingless child to have been born and given up for adoption.

I was comforted by their welcome and surprised as well. For such a reclusive race, they did not display the xenophobic behavior one would typically ascribe to a race of hermits.

Avariel communities have a variety of governing models, from oligarchy to complete autocracy, but the city council tends to be the most common. This is certainly the case with Myrravin, with a ruling council of nine citizens. These individuals are elected by the populace

at large and serve for a term of one decade. Each position on the council is open at a different time (one position every year and a half), in order to maintain continuity. While various council members may be voted out, the city will never have to face a council of entirely new, inexperienced individuals at the helm. Such a government does have its advantages, of course, as consistency and continuity are good, but it does leave the door open to ennui and even stagnation.

The avariel are indeed reclusive, and they do not often engage in communication with other races. They do, more typically, communicate formally with various elven communities, particularly the grey elves. It is joked that the avariel are the only ones who are not put off by grey elven snobbery; while not snobs themselves, the avariel are simply above such behavior. Sometimes trade delegations are sent out, and on occasion diplomatic envoys travel just to see the state of the outside world. Sometimes visitors are even invited to Myrravin and treated with the utmost hospitality. However, the avariel are genuinely content to roost in their aeries and enjoy life as only they truly can.

Ways of life

Soon after my welcome to Myrravin, I quickly noticed a striking cultural polarity. Avariel community is divided between warriors and aesthetes, but the division appears to be peaceful. Entire lineages appear dedicated to this cultural system, with families typically devoted to one of the two lifestyles. If such tendencies are indeed familial and capable of being passed on through generations, then I must no doubt have come from one of the intellectual dynasties. Although no slouch with a weapon, combat has always been my least concern and my last recourse.

From my conversation with my guides, I learned that Myrravin is unique in that it serves as a common home for the two disparate halves. Typically, avariel communities are of one way of life or the other; although in close proximity to each other, they maintain their own lifestyles and their own pursuits, martial or philosophical.

Avariel culture is indeed split between two modes of activity. On the one side there are the thinkers, the artists, the aesthetes, and philosophers. The other side consists of the warriors, those who protect avariel society, hunt for it as necessary, and preserve the

peace. These two halves typically have mutual respect, each confident of the value and merit of the other. Most of the smaller avariel cities cater to one half or the other, but Myrravin has long been a home for winged elves of both types.

City planners and architects are among the most respected individuals in avariel intellectual society, for their professions require a combination of both science and art, engineering and design. Architects, like members of other intellectual disciplines, gather in guilds that monitor the education and development of its representatives. While guild membership is never required, it is highly desirable, as guilds offer their members training, education, research materials, and steady forums for debate. There are very few guilds for warriors, as the avariel military often serves the same function. One warriors' guild does exist, though, which actually hires out avariel mercenaries. Most of the guild's customers are other avariel — typically the intellectual ones — but a few non-avariel have been known to pay the steep price asked in exchange for even one well-trained winged warrior.

Families in Myrravin are often "bred" along certain lines, with some notable dynasties stretching back over centuries, having produced generations of outstanding family members. Children of various families are educated in a school, regardless of a particular family's philosophical bent, in order to ensure a common educational grounding. Such schooling focuses on history, language, religion, and culture, as well as physical exercise and creative games.

However, families also retain private tutors, the better to train their children in whichever type of activity the family excels (or prefers). It is not uncommon for children of one lifestyle to become curious about another one, as warriors try to understand thinkers, and philosophers attempt to imagine life as a fighter. Exchange programs exist for the benefit of such endeavors, with families sponsoring children in order to tutor them. While it is common for avariel youth to participate in such an exchange program, it is rare for one to become personally devoted to a lifestyle so different from that of his family. In such cases, while each subculture appreciates the value of the other, there is typically some resentment from the family; while they have not lost a member of the family, its dynastic history has lost a representative.



While Myrravin does not have a nobility per se, some families consider governance to be their predominant trait, and they train their children in the political sciences. Regardless of whether these youths ever attain positions of political prominence, they often work in the governing structure on behalf of their city.

Some dynasties have actually managed to produce a number of heirs who have served admirably on Myrravin's city council; whether this will ever become a "natural aristocracy" and produce a ruling class has yet to be seen. Of course, whether the residents of Myrravin will resist such a trend is an important factor.

The Hall of Elders

Sure as I was of my family's scholarly heritage, my next visit was to the Hall of Elders, which contains the collected wisdom and writings of generations of avariel scholars. There, in a magnificent glass-domed reading room, scores of avariel peruse scrolls and tomes on a variety of subjects. Unable to read the written avariel tongue, which I was only now beginning to speak, I felt at a loss, and distant from my heritage. I strolled around the Hall, marvelling at the beauty and serenity of the place. Meanwhile, scholars researched my lineage, attempting to locate any wingless births in the past century.

The Hall of Elders is one of the most prominent institutions in Myrravin. It supports the scholarly endeavors of half of the city's population. Occupying a location near the central plaza, its many spires and domes pale in comparison to the central dome over the Hall's reading room. The actual volumes and scrolls are stored elsewhere in the Hall and are retrieved only as requested by patrons. Many other chambers may be found within the Hall, from debate chambers to small auditoriums, to studies and laboratories that may be rented out on a monthly basis.

The Hall of Elders of Myrravin has one of the finest collections of avariel scholarship and lore. Because avariel culture sponsors so much intellectual and creative activity, the shelves and storage chambers of the Hall of Elders are filled with seemingly endless works of science, poetry, literature, and philosophy. Unfortunately, its collections on societies other than the avariel are sorely lacking, limited as it is by the general avariel isolation and lack of interspecies communication. The Hall acts as the official archives for Myrravin, containing all records generated as part of the city's history, from genealogies to tax records. Finally, and most importantly for some, the Hall of Elders also contains many works of magical speculation and practice, and mages pay dearly for access to the collections secreted within the Hall.

The Hall of Elders is, in addition to a physical structure, a guild of scholars and sages, priests, and anyone else dedicated to scholarly acquisition and development, with the majority of its members tending to be mages. The avariel are elves, after all, and magic runs in their blood, inspiring and inciting them. The Hall, as the largest, oldest, and best

supported guild, frequently arranges meetings between mages and would-be apprentices; while its members may specialize in particular schools, other guilds frequently take care of specialist mages. It is not uncommon for a member of the Elders to be a member of Myrravin's ruling council, and this fellowship is actually an active force in Myrravin's life: establishing symposia, sponsoring lectures, funding research expeditions, and training teachers for the schools that all avariel youths ultimately attend.

Trade and commerce

After much research, two couples were established as possible candidates for my parenting, but to my dismay, neither of the couples resided in Myrravin anymore. The first couple, both members of the Hall of Elders, died only a decade ago in an expedition to explore the ruins of a nearby mountaintop city, believed to have been built by giants. Both husband and wife were fond of debate and study, traits that I certainly shared. I visited relatives of this couple and felt quite welcome. Although my possible-cousins certainly were not in any position to ascertain whether I was kin, their hospitality was warm and generous, and indeed we spent many hours discussing the finer aspects of grey elven mythology.

The second couple, much less likely my parents but still worthy of consideration, moved to another aerie-city, and couriers were attempting to contact them. These two individuals were warriors, the woman a mercenary and the man a member of the Talons, the elite warrior corps. While waiting for the couriers' return — which was anticipated to take at least a fortnight — I continued my tour of Myrravin.

At the center of the city is the great Plaza, the perimeter of which is lined with a variety of shops and stalls. I visited these shops to sample the artifactual evidence of Myrravin culture, and I was amazed at what I saw. The Myrravin do not rely heavily upon metalworking, for the open frame of the forge poses too great a danger to their sensitive and flammable wings. Some smiths exist in spite of the danger, but the majority of metals or metal-shaped objects are usually imported.

Ironically, the majority of avariel craft-work is in fired glass and crystal (the glass kilns apparently do not concern the avariel as much as do forges), with some stunning products that seem to capture the light for a moment before releasing it in a colorful burst. Stone-carving is also a favored craft, with items from beads to statuettes to full-

size sculptures proudly displayed. Rolls of the finest cloth were also available, some of such quality that they must have been spun from the stuff of clouds. I was soon garbed in the short, loose-flowing tunic of my kin.

Metals are rare in avariel society, and they are usually products of trade or exploration. Anyone attempting to purchase even the most common metal item can expect to pay anywhere from twice to 10 times the purchase price listed in the *PHB* — the high end is particularly the case when buying weapons. Most weapons in use by the winged elves are crafted of glass, but these are among the greatest glass-works in creation. (Assume that the cost listed in the *PHB* applies to avariel glass weapons.) Of course, such weapons are more prone to breakage: on a natural attack roll of 1 with a glass weapon, the weapon shatters. Not all such constructs are fragile — fine glass weapons as durable as steel are known to exist. Such weapons are, of course, quite expensive, approximately 200% the cost of standard glass weapons. Currency, incidentally, tends to be in the form of ornamental or semi-precious stones.

Although fond of ornament, the avariel tend to be conservative in choosing the colors of their clothing. Whites and various shades of gray are preferred. When proper dyes are used, the grays can be quite beautiful. Their clothing ranges from the short one-shoulder tunic belted at the waist to longer, togalike wraps. Cloaks are worn, usually thick woolen materials that hang around the shoulders and chest but are open in the back, just enough for wings to unfold without releasing too much body warmth. The wings of the avariel make wearing standard clothing impossible, of course, and adaptations have been developed to make up for this. Leather sandals and low boots are the preferred footwear.

Avariel religion

One of the many places I visited was Myrravin's temple to Aerdrie Faenya, the elven goddess of air and weather. The avariel are a deeply religious people, utterly dedicated to the veneration of their goddess, whom they credit with their survival. Unique to the avariel, of course, is her depiction with wings. Their temple to Aerdrie Faenya is as unique as their iconography of her: it is located on an isolated crag, requiring that her devotees fly to her (I, of course,

was carried) and land on one of the many balconies that encircle the sanctuary. Within the sanctuary, beneath an enormous vaulted ceiling, the avariel sing a joyous harmony of glorification and praise. In their services to Aerdrie Faenya, the avariel thank her for her protection and guidance, and for their creation.

Religion is, in many ways, the focus of avariel society; how it has managed to avoid becoming a true theocracy confounds its observers. Any avariel may be accepted into Aerdrie Faenya's priesthood, regardless of family or station: in fact, Aerdrie Faenya's priesthood is seen as the great equalizer that brings together the children of diverse families and draws upon their individual strengths. While some priests are more martial, and others more contemplative, they all have their roles to play in the priesthood.

The origin of the avariel is shrouded in mystery. Three separate origins have been posited. The majority of the avariel themselves believe what their own religion endorses: that they are the first true elves, and that other elves descended from them bereft of the gift of flight. Strangely, most avariel do not use this as a means of asserting superiority over other elves. Although the avariel pity their wingless kin, they also recognize them for their own merits and accomplishments. In spite of this, it must be admitted that some racism is implicit in avariel society, but it is much more tame than that of other Elven sub-races.

Other sages believe that the avariel are a strange magical hybrid of standard elves and giant eagles. This theory is typically accepted by the more analytic observers of avariel society, or others who are loathe to automatically ascribe a theological origin to everything. Even some of the less religious members of avariel society have come to accept this hypothesis.

Another theory about the origins of the avariel, one that is usually espoused by the winged elves' more critical detractors, is that the avariel were created by a permanent magical grafting of *wings of flying* onto standard elves, who then bred the feature true into their offspring. Very few avariel accept this theory, although the more irreligious cynics among them have come to espouse it just to irritate their more religious brethren.

Avariel weapons

Wing sword

This blade, between the lengths of a short sword and a long sword, is a primary weapon for many winged elves. Because long swords are inherently dangerous to avariel (posing the risk of damaging a wing with a bad backswing), the wing sword was developed as a more deadly alternative to the short sword.

Eagle-claw

This is typically a leather glove with a series of blades extending past the knuckle. They may be used either in a fashion similar to a cestus, providing additional damage when punching an opponent, or they can be used to rake an opponent when swooping upon them. Eagle-claws may be worn individually or in pairs.

Nets

Avariel favor use of nets when attempting to subdue an opponent rather than slay him. Avariel fly over opponents, dropping weighted nets on them, or they fly in pairs, bearing a net between them and swooping down upon an opponent to entangle him in the netting.

Item	cost	Weight	Size	Type	Speed	Dmg (S-N/L)
Wing sword	12 gp	4	S	S/P	4	1d8/1d8
Eagle-claws	7 gp	1	s	S/P	1	1d3/1d3

Combat

I was invited to visit the Arena, where the members of the Talons trained for their duties or just exercised for sport, and where students could come to learn the arts of war. There, in an enormous arena — with a covered awning that could be removed to open the forum to the sky — I saw scores of winged elves training in the military arts. Here at last was the second half of avariel society, and I could see what fierce warriors these normally gentle people could be.

I watched my winged brethren practice attacking targets in formation, flying upward and circling back to swoop down upon them. I watched them practice grappling mid-air, using their arms and legs to strike opponents when weapons were not available. I even saw a number of avariel practice ground-based swordplay, and here the difference was noticeable: some were actually clumsy and awkward, while others seemed to fight as naturally on the ground as they did in the air.

Many wingless ones believe that avariel combat is merely fighting while flying; they do not take into account the variety of options that have been opened up or removed by the presence of large beating, flapping wings upon a warrior's back. A number of special maneuvers have been created by avariel warriors, to best utilize the strengths and to mitigate their weaknesses:

❖ **Ground combat:** Most avariel are decidedly at a disadvantage when fight-

ing on the ground; their wings tend to hamper them in melee. Any avariel fighting while grounded suffers an automatic -2 to hit and a +2 AC penalty. However, some avariel have learned to manage the difficulties of ground combat and are not at all hampered by it. This requires use of the new non-weapon proficiency, ground fighting.

❖ **Swoop:** Some avariel have mastered the art of swooping down on their enemy, allowing their momentum to cause more damage with minimal muscle power. Avariel can attempt this form of attack only once every other round, requiring a full round to maneuver. The attacking avariel gains a +2 to hit/+2 to damage, in addition to any other modifiers. However, they are also flying into an opponent's attack, so any attack on them is at +2 damage as well.

❖ **Hovering/Leaping:** Contrary to popular belief, avariel do not hover well; too much muscular strain is required. However, they sometimes use their wings to propel themselves upward for a 10' leap and then descend quickly; by attacking on the downswing, they gain a +2 attack bonus for the advantage of height.

❖ **Wing Buffet:** Grounded avariel may strike an opponent with their wings; targets must be directly beside or behind them, however, and the buffet does not gain any attack or damage modifiers for Dexterity or Strength. Such an attack may be performed in addition to any other melee attack and inflicts

Avariel proficiencies

Glassworking

(General/1 or 3 slots/Dexterity)

This skill allows for the creation of glass items from as simple and utilitarian or beautiful and decorative. The use of this skill requires a furnace. The more complete version of this skill (3 slots) is necessary to construct glass weapons.

Ground combat

(Warrior/2 slots/Dexterity)

This skill concentrates on ground-based fighting, teaching the warrior to overcome natural limitations caused by wings. Knowledge of this proficiency cancels the standard disadvantages for ground fighting for avariel.

swoop

(Warrior/1 slot/Dexterity)

This proficiency represents special training in the swoop maneuver; it provides the attacker a bonus +1 to hit and to damage.

Wing buffet

(Warrior/1 slot/Dexterity)

This proficiency is special training in the wing-buffer form of attack; it allows a +1 to attack and damage.

Grab-and-drop

(Warrior/1 slot/Strength)

This maneuver gives a +2 to the attacking avariel's attack roll.

1d4 per wing. No more than one target may be selected per wing: one target to the rear may be targeted with both wings, for 2d4 damage.

❖ **Grab-and-Drop:** A particularly nasty form of attack is used when avariel grab an opponent and fly upward, finally releasing the victim to fall to the ground. This is not as easy as it seems. The attacker must grab his opponent in such a fashion that the victim cannot grab back. This requires a successful attack roll. Failure means that the opponent has either squirmed out of the attacker's hands or is holding on to the avariel. Those proficient in this special maneuver gain a +2 to the attack roll.

Unfortunately, few avariel are able to wear armor. Typically, armor is restricted to padded, leather, or leather studded with crystal or glass rivets (AC 7). Elven mail or steel must usually be specially

made for an winged elf, and this is both rare and expensive. Shields are sometimes used, but rarely is anything larger than a medium shield employed.

Finally, I was contacted by couriers returning with news of my possible-parents. The male of the couple had perished just last year, defending his city from a dragon's attack. The female had agreed to return to Myrravin, dubious that it was her child who had returned.

When I was escorted to the tavern in which she was staying, I was confronted by a tall woman with long white hair, pulled back severely from her face in a simple pony-tail. She was garbed in the typical whites and grays of the avariel, but she also wore a finely crafted mail breastplate — no doubt elven steel, specially crafted for her — and she was armed with a miscellany of weapons, each made of either glass or metal. When she turned to greet me, the suspicious look on her face melted to one of both joy and sorrow, and the dour warrior became the saddened mother: she ran to me, tears rolling down her cheeks, exclaiming that I could be none other than her own child, for my visage was the exact replica of my recently-deceased father's. After we spoke, she was able to confirm that my adoptive parents were indeed the same family she had sent her own wingless child to so many years ago. At long last I had found my true mother, and I had returned full circle.

Avariel attributes

Avariel characters, due to their unique physiology, have a -2 to Constitution and a +2 to Dexterity. Some DMs may insist that avariel lose their Dexterity bonus when operating on the ground.

Ability	Minimum	Maximum
Strength	8	18
Dexterity	8	20
Constitution	4	16
Intelligence	8	18
Wisdom	3	18
Charisma	10	18

Languages: Avariel elvish, high elvish, grey elvish, common, aarakocra, giant eagle. The avariel, like the drow, also utilize a complex form of sign language. This sign language is useful for long-distance communication and is employed when the avariel do not wish to disrupt the natural sounds of their surroundings.

Infravision: 60'.

Special Advantages: Like birds, the avariel have keen eyesight and are able to see clearly for up to a mile.

Certainly the most noticeable advantage of the avariel is their wings. They are graceful and fast. In flight, their movement rate is 18. Their maneuverability is type C, and they must follow the standard combat-based flight rules stipulated within the *DMG*.

Unlike other elves, avariel do not gain an automatic +1 with swords and bows. Although they do favor swords, they are unable to use any blade longer than a long sword when in flight. Even this weapon presents problems; an avariel who fumbles in combat with a long or broad sword will most likely damage one of his own wings. Furthermore, the avariel do not use bows, because of the opposing muscles used to draw a bow while in flight. They have, however, become proficient in crossbow use.

Disadvantages: As said, the wings of an avariel can be a burden at times; their Movement rate in land-based activity is 9. Furthermore, in spite of their biological adaptations, their weight is still somewhat difficult for their wings to carry, and it can be quite painful: for each hour of flight, a winged elf must successfully make a Constitution check; if the check fails, then the avariel must rest for half an hour per two hours of flight prior to the check.

In combat, if an avariel loses more than 50% of his hit points, then he becomes too weak to fly. He can still glide, however, or jump up to 10', until he loses 75% of his hit points.

Avariel can carry mass equal to their own body weight before they are too weak to fly. Each half of their body weight causes their maneuverability to drop by 1. Likewise, if they are more than Lightly encumbered, their maneuverability drops to D.

Finally, avariel are noticeably claustrophobic; confined places, particularly subterranean ones, are decidedly painful to them. When confined, even "voluntarily," they must make daily Wisdom checks. A failure produces temporary insanity, with behavior ranging from the violent to the autistic. The exact nature of this insanity is up to the DM's discretion, but it is always debilitating to the avariel. This behavior continues until the avariel returns to open air. Four failed Wisdom checks produces permanent insanity, curable only by a *heal* or *remove disease* spell.

Classes

The following classes are open to avariel characters:

Warrior

Avariel may become fighters. Although avariel live in harmony with nature, they are too aloof to become rangers. As elves, they cannot become paladins, but they may become demipaladins (fighter/cleric multiclass), according to *The Complete Paladin's Handbook*. Typical paladin kits include the divinare and envoy.

Mage

Avariel may become generalist mages or specialists. Avariel specialists tend to be elementalists more often than not, particularly air elementalists. Fire elementalists are rare, and they are forbidden in most avariel communities because of the inherent danger that fire poses to avariel plumage.

Priest

Avariel characters may become clerics of any deity, although typically Aerdrine Faenya is the chosen one. They may become general clerics or specialists.

Rogue

Avariel thieves do exist, but they are less common than in other societies. Bards are particularly welcome in avariel society, especially heralds, loremasters, and minstrels (see *The Complete Bard's Handbook*). Any avariel rogue automatically has a 50% penalty to attempts at climbing walls.

Multiclass

Thief/mage (particularly spellfilchers from CBE); fighter/mage (particularly war wizards, from CBE); fighter/thief; fighter/mage/thief; cleric/fighter.

Avariel Kits

The following new kits are designed particularly for avariel characters.

Courier

The courier is often dismissed as nothing more than a glorified messenger, but such a description belittles the commitment and training required to fulfill the difficult duties of these avariel. Couriers may be rogues, fighters, or multiclassed.

Role: The courier has been trained for many miles of uninterrupted flight to

deliver messages (or even rare packages) between various avariel communities and has learned to endure hours of flight, which may be otherwise painful to most avariel, including through foul weather. Couriers are hardly mere messengers; they are often individualists, rugged and unique, able to survive — and enjoy — days of solitary travel. Most couriers belong to their own guild, which ensures training as well as fair payment policies.

Requirements: Constitution 13.

Secondary skills: Scribe.

Weapon proficiencies: Wing sword, short sword, dagger, spear, crossbow: weapons that are either easy to carry or useful in survival conditions.

Nonweapon proficiencies: *Bonus:* Endurance. *Required:* Reading/writing avariel elvish. *Recommended:* Direction sense; reading/writing, grey elvish, common; local history; navigation; survival (mountains, forests).

Armor/Equipment: Couriers learn to travel light, so each item that one carries either has multiple purposes or is absolutely necessary.

Special Benefits: In times of great need, Couriers make their livelihood by travel, and they have learned to overcome the painful limitations of flight. When traveling, they can travel for four hours before making a Constitution check, and need only rest a half-hour for every two hours traveled when such a check is failed. If speed is an issue, then they can travel at faster speeds (Movement 24), but every two hours they must make a Constitution check according to standard rules.

Special hindrances: Couriers are loners and do not often interact well in groups. Although they are able to cooperate with others, they find it hard to listen to any authority other than their own experience. Furthermore, as members of an active guild, couriers must be prepared to be sent on missions at any time, regardless of their own current activities.

Skywarden

The skywardens are self-appointed protectors of the skies, the mountain-tops, and anywhere that the avariel might travel. They are also known to help wingless ones who are lost or injured when in their domain.

Role: The skywardens are another group of individualists in avariel society, who feel compelled to live apart from

their own people in order to protect their natural environment. They are the closest to rangers that avariel can find, and they often cooperate well with rangers, since their missions and duties often overlap. Some particularly devout Skywardens like to play upon their exotic appearance and allow people to believe that the avariel are the chosen messengers of the Aerdrine Faenya. Skywardens are often accompanied by any number of avian companions. This kit is open to fighters, clerics, and fighter/clerics.

Requirements: Endurance 10, Wisdom 13, Charisma 13.

Secondary skills: Healer, trapper.

Weapon proficiencies: Any allowed by class.

Nonweapon proficiencies: *Bonus:* Animal lore, animal training (birds). *Recommended:* Direction sense, herbalism, healing, local history, navigation.

Armor/Equipment: Like couriers, Skywardens tend to travel light, with the equipment only necessary to accomplish their job.

Special Benefits: Skywardens have limited empathy with avian creatures. They have the same relationship with birds that rangers do with most natural animals; see the description of rangers in the *PHB* for a full detailing of this ability, but remember that it applies only to birds. Furthermore, at 8th level, they gain 2d4 birds (or other flying creatures) as followers. The DM can roll 1d6 to determine each follower or come up with a unique list:

Winged companions

1. falcon
2. eagle
3. hawk
4. dragonne
5. raven
6. owl

Special hindrances: Skywardens can never willingly allow anyone to suffer in their domain, provided they are aware of it. They must minister to wounded animals as well as humans, demi-humans, and humanoid visitors to their lands. While skywardens may live for a while in cities, they prefer isolated homes in the heart of their protected domains. Finally, skywardens must be of a good (lawful, chaotic or neutral) alignment. If any of these criteria are broken or ignored, they lose their special benefits.

Talon

Talons are elite warriors, trained in the defense of Myrravin and other aerie-cities. Even communities that are composed entirely of intellectuals and aesthetes tend to have a number of Talons stationed for their defense. They are marked by their uniform appearance, wearing distinctive leather harnesses from which hang a number of weapons.

Role: Talons represent the ideal avariel warrior, specialists in the military arts. Membership in the Talons is a common goal for many young warriors, but only the best are accepted as full members, rather than just employees. Their education is arduous, involving years of combat instruction and character-building exercises as the young Talons-in-training are forged into professional warriors. Each individual's tenure among the Talons varies; for some, it is a lifetime (and a family heritage), while for others it is merely training for a lucrative mercenary career. This kit is exclusively for fighters.

Requirements: Strength 13, Endurance 12, Dexterity 13.

Secondary skills: Any.

Weapon proficiencies: *Bonus:* Specialization in either eagle-claws or wing sword. *Required:* Proficiency in whichever of the previous options is not specialized in, as well as crossbow.

Nonweapon proficiencies: Recommended: Blind-fighting, navigation, etiquette.

Armor/equipment: All Talons wear a distinctive dark leather harness, at the center of which is a crest indicating rank and unit.

Special benefits: All Talons are automatically proficient in the players choice of any two of the special combat maneuvers: swoop, grab-and-drop, ground-fighting wing buffet. Talons are well-respected among other avariel, especially the warrior class. Talons receive a +3 reaction modifier when encountering any avariel (reduced to +1 for ex-Talons).

Special hindrances: Talons are members of a guild that operates very much

like a military force, and they are forced to obey the chain of command as well as a strict code of conduct. Anyone who is drummed out of the Talons suffers a -3 reaction modifier. They can be rather difficult to work with, automatically expecting every group to function like a well-oiled fighting machine — which simply is not always the case. Furthermore, because of the extensive training that Talons are required to pursue, they receive one less non-weapon proficiency at first level.



Since originally submitting this report for approval, James Estes has been seen nowhere in or around court. The royal advisors suspect that he has made his own pilgrimage to Myrravin, but the court wizard has yet to divine the location of the aerie-city to confirm this rumor.

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FIENDISH FORTRESSES

From infernal halls
to the courts of chaos

by Monte Cook

illustrated by Adam Rex

Some folks say that fiends — them bashers from the Lower Planes — are products of the beliefs of Prime Material berks. I guess that's probably true enough. Fiends represent evil and all that. Not a kind word to be said about the lot of 'em.

But then the same screed'll tell a body that, because fiends are the offspring of belief, they model themselves after the believers. I just can't twig to that sort of wig-wag. Here's the chant, and listen good: things on the Lower Planes ain't like they are on the Prime. Sure, they're fighting a big Blood War, but it's like no war fought anywhere else.

Take the strongholds the fiends build for themselves, for example. On the Prime (and elsewhere, too, I know), a berk building himself a castle surrounds the whole thing with a wall and a moat, hiding his sparkles and jink in a high tower or in deep, dark vault under the ground. Nothing like a fiend's castle, let me tell you.

See, I was there, all up-close and real-like. I fought in the Blood War for... I have no idea how long, but long enough to tumble to a thing or two. I've seen sights no mortal should ever see. Tarrek Norstro, mercenary (retired) at your service.

In the Planescape™ setting, the fiends of the Lower Planes are among the most feared yet intriguing of foes. These creatures exemplify, personify, and even embody evil. Their powers are fearsome, their violence and ferocity unmatched. The places that they inhabit — the Abyss, Baator, the Gray Waste, and the other Planes of Evil — are spoken of by the canny in hushed tones, for they hold horrors no mortal should ever experience. Nonetheless, planewalkers (those bold planar adventurers who travel the multiverse) continually find themselves traversing the nether regions, either avoiding or taking part in the terrible Blood War fought between the lawful and chaotic groups of fiends — the baatezu and tanar'ri respectively.

In Sigil, one might be surprised at how freely the chant flows. The number of old hands volunteering their own views on tanar'ri, baatezu, and the Blood War can be overwhelming. When a body tries to weed out the cony-catchers, the peel-masters, the barmies, the screeds, and the out-right liars, however there's not much left.

Even Tarrek doesn't know the very latest chant about the Blood War and the most recent, surprising development concerning the fiends. For this information, interested bloods are going to have to look at Hellbound. Not to worry, though. These changes are so new that the vast majority of fiendish fortresses won't be altered to compensate for some time — so Tarrek's chant is still virtually priceless.





In the court of the fiend-king

Sure, I've been in a fiend's castle. I've assaulted them, I've defended them, I've even spoken civilly with the inhabitants a few times. See, there was this yagnoloth — you've heard of them, right? — yugoloth noble, as I understand it. These fiends remain neutral in the Blood War, often offering their services to whichever side's paying the best that day. Now that's a philosophy I can twig to.

Anyway, I had to go listen to this cutter rattle his bone-box about the specifics of some mission. See, lots of yugoloths sub-contract their mercenary work to berks like me — that's how I got a job attacking a tanar'ri fortress... well, let me get to the yugoloth first. This fiend had quite a place, especially the throne room.

The yagnoloth, whose name was Whvis (or something like that), held court with a whole gaggle of cutters. His throne room was filled with minor yugoloths, like piscoloths and mezolloths, but they were among the least interesting bashers there. Night hags, shadow fiends, and finely-dressed tieflings came before this noble with petitions, grievances, and queries. Even a few rogue tanar'ri (with a lone amnizu baatezu sending them deadly glances), a sinister and silent githyanki warrior, a foul-smelling shator gehreleth, and a solitary slaadi emissary. (What could it have been doing there?) lastly, there were a great many mephits flitting about like insects. These were attendants of the various fiends, messengers going to and fro, and others that were probably just pests.

But as I waited there, listening to these monsters hold court and discuss issues unfathomable to me, it was the fortress itself that held my attention. See, Whvis had the place constructed in the most unnerving way possible. This is a common thing for fiendish lords to do, to keep their friends as well as their enemies off guard. The entire court was built over a pool of bubbling and boiling acid and then floored with glass or some other transparent material, so that all standing before the throne realized how close they were to destruction.

My mercenary's eye looked around and noted the defenses that he had placed around the court as well. There were the obvious maelephant and yugoloth guardians, but they were for show as much as they were for actual defense (though don't miss my meaning — a blood

couldn't find more capable warriors). The ceiling was filled with hidden murder holes, and there were high balconies that surely hid archers or crossbowmen or even spellcasters. Plus, you can be as sure as Sigil that there was some way to unhinge that floor to dump any threatening sod into the acid below — even a greater fiend is going to quake at the thought of that.

Even the way into the throne room was designed with both intimidation and defense in mind. The passage that I and a few of my comrades were escorted through was wide and imposing, filled with terrifying statuary of violent and gruesome images. Again, my peery gazes revealed that these statues had small compartments and notches that certainly contained traps like darts or poison gas or worse.

I finished my business there and gave the place the laugh as soon as I could. Being a guest in a fiend's fortress is only slightly better (and perhaps not better at all) than being an invading enemy.

Citadels of the lower planes

The fiends aren't like humans or elves or what have you when it comes to building their keeps. The reason's as simple as the point of your blade. They can do things that most folks can't — teleport, fly, and lots more.

What that means is that a body won't find a curtain wall surrounding most fiendish castles. Walls like that are useless in the Blood War, since practically anyone can simply fly, jump, glide, or teleport past them. So, there are no courtyards or baileys to muster troops or protect livestock. Cities are very hard to protect with walls being useless, but most Blood War battles aren't fought over cities. Besides, there's always the old saying, "a city full of fiends is far worse to assault than any fortress," so they don't need much protection when you get down to it. Interestingly enough, most fiendish cities — as opposed to fortresses — are surrounded by a so-called defensive wall. I figure its just for show.

Fiendish defensive constructions always involve a good deal of intimidation. They often're made to appear to be great beasts or piles of corpses ('course, some actually are piles of corpses) or something similar to frighten their enemies. While the opposing fiends aren't frightened by this, as a mortal mercenary who fought in some of those battles, I can tell you now that its plenty

unnerving to march into battle to assail a place made to look like a giant skull — complete with moving eyes still in their sockets. I still have nightmares about that place.

As important as all this is, what's most vital about a fiend's citadel is what a body can't lay his eyes on. What with baatezu, tanar'ri, and even yugoloths being able to pop anywhere they want with teleportation, many fortresses are built with secret portions that the enemy won't think to try to teleport to, since they don't know they exist. Most of these hidden structures are underground, though I've heard tell of sections being hidden

underwater, made to appear as ruins, or even secreted away behind particularly powerful illusions. The hidden parts of the fortress often hold the most valuable elements of the defense, such as supplies and leaders, as well as jink and prisoners. They also provide avenues to secretly move into positions allowing the defenders to strike with surprise against the attackers.

Rarely, the baatezu — and less often, the tanar'ri — utilize artillery in either their fortresses or their attacks against other forts. Catapults and ballistae are common — that's not what I'm talking about. The dark is that the fiends have access to bombards that can launch huge metal rounds at the enemy with explosive force. Others have strange catapult-like devices that hurl spells of destruction much farther and with greater force than the magic's potential normally allows.

The baatezu

All right then. It was about twenty eight, twenty nine years ago. Me and about thirty others were working for a tanar'ri named Xoun, a real sodding slop-sucker, if you get my meaning. We

were in the first Gloom of the Waste. Xoun had us infiltrate baatezu lines and scout around. This place is as desolate and dreary as you can imagine. I don't know about such things, so I've got no idea if it's so bleak because the fiends have been fighting there forever, or if

that's just the nature of the place. Seems to me that

it's just the way the plane is. That grayness, it gets to

you. Anyway, the baatezu had held this dirt for some time — they'd had a while to dig themselves in and prepare a few surprises.

Now,

here's a way to look at the two sides of the Blood War. The

baatezu are more militaristic. They like marching around, giving orders, making weapons, digging trenches and all that. Now, if you're Clueless, you're saying to yourself, I suppose that means that the tanar'ri are peace-loving pacifists. Keep up, berk. The tanar'ri are just as horrible and violent as their foes, they're just not interested in military organization as much. They're more crazed — like vicious killers. Basically, the Blood War is a conflict between an army of regimented, disciplined war mongers and a bunch of psychopathic murderers.

This comes out clearly when you look at their fortresses. The baatezu installation that we came upon that day in the Gray Waste was a tall tower with a huge globe on the top (they made it look like a large scaly arm thrusting up out of the ground with a silver sphere clutched in its claw — they've at least got style). The whole thing was at least 300' high, and there wasn't a door or window to be seen on the tower- or arm-part. It was just a support. The globe, however, was covered with arrow slits, murder holes, and balconies from which to launch attacks down upon any offensive strikes. The area around the tower — everywhere

SOME ASK ME
THE BEST WAY
+⊕ DEFEAT A GIVEN
FIEND, +ANAR'RI ⊕
BAA+EZU.
I TELL THEM EVERY TIME:
HIDE IN YOUR KIP
AND CHEER FOR THEIR
REAL ENEMIES,
'CAUSE YOU'RE NEVER
THE FIEND'S BIGGEST THREAT.
— TERREK
NORS+RO

Weapons of the Blood War

The Blood War has produced many weapons of mass destruction. Here are three different types of artillery used by the fiends. These virtually never fall into the hands of non-fiends, and the mortal who does obtain one usually regrets it soon after, when the fiends arrive at his doorstep to collect their rightful property.

Baatezu bombard

This baatezu weapon looks like a long barrel of black iron. When fiendish magic is applied, it fires a large metal or stone ball up to one-mile.

It takes 15 rounds to load and fire the great artillery piece, and its aim is very clumsy, taking up to 15 additional rounds to effectively change its target or re-aim. It has no chance of hitting a living, mobile creature of size S or M, and the attack roll to hit size L creatures is at - 4. It inflicts 3d10 hp damage. For purposes of hitting enchanted creatures, this weapon is treated as one with a bonus of +3.

Levlevor "Spell's Long Reach"

This weapon was made and named by the yugoloths, who've sold them to both sides of the Blood War. It looks like a standard light catapult, but it is actually a powerful magical device. If a ranged spell is cast into the device, the spell can be launched (it must be fired immediately after casting) as a light catapult missile, giving the spell a range of 300 yards. In all other respects, the spell is resolved normally. The weapon can be used once every 10 rounds.

Fist of Graz'zt

This tanar'ri weapon looks like a small bombard, usually mounted on a tripod or base, or perhaps even steadied on the shoulder of a large and sturdy fiend. Spells cast through the fist of Graz'zt are magnified in their ability to inflict damage in order to destroy fortifications. Spells of an immediate, violent nature (such as fireball, lightning bolt, Melf's acid arrow, etc.) inflict twice as much damage — but only in regard to non-living, inanimate targets.

The fist is extremely useful in blowing holes in things to allow an attack to pass through a barrier. Range, area of effect, and durations are not increased by this weapon.

Teleport traps

Very simply, there is a 10% chance that a fiend teleporting blind into a baatezu fortress with such defenses will fall victim of the traps. Some types of trap include:

Acid: This is the most common type, since it is a universal agent of harm among fiends and most lower planar creatures. Those immersed within suffer 5d6 hp damage per round — although a saving throw indicates only half damage is sustained.

Crushing Trap: When the enchantment within the room detects the presence of an intruder, the walls of this empty room slam shut immediately, while the fiend recovers and reorients itself from the teleport. The closing walls deal 3d10 hp damage to those caught within.

Teleport Bounce: One of the more insidious teleport traps, this activates as soon as a victim enters the area, teleporting it yet again to a completely different location — sometimes far away, sometimes in a very hostile environment, and sometimes to another teleport bounce location... ad infinitum. The fiendish victim has no chance to save, but magic resistance applies.

within arrow or spell range — was a staging ground for the lower-ranking troops, which probably never actually got to see the inside of the globe. This means the lemures and nupperibo, as well as various charmed monsters and hired mercenaries, stayed on the ground. There were no ladders or stairs going up to the globe, 'cause the fiends could just teleport up to where they wanted to go.

Now, then, you might be saying, how do they keep the tanar'ri from doing the same and teleporting right inside Clutched Victory (that's what they called the place)? Good question. They don't. Like many baatezu fortresses, Clutched Victory was segmented into a series of very small chambers. There was no place inside the stronghold into which the tanar'ri could teleport a large force. The defenders guarded each of these tiny rooms, just waiting for a lone attacker (or maybe two) to appear, and then they'd attack while the teleporting fiends got their bearings.

See, in a Lower Planar fortress, there's really not such things as "outer defenses" and "inner defenses." Something deep

inside a castle is just as vulnerable as anything else. So the fiends are prepared for attackers to appear anywhere.

If for some reason (such as a spell or something), teleportation was prevented from occurring on a battlefield, the defenders could quickly adapt and just move to the outer edges of the fortress (in this case the outer edge of the sphere) to defend against conventional attacks. In fact, the fiends of both sides have such good tactics for defeating teleporting attacks that conventional assaults are as common as not. Against the segmented fortress defense such as in Clutched Victory, the tanar'ri quickly learned that mass assaults from the outside are just as effective as teleporting inside.

Plus, there's always teleport traps. The traps? Well, they're a nasty little invention. Chant is, it was actually the yugoloths that came up with them, but both sides of the war use them now. I don't know if they were used at Clutched Victory, but they probably were. They're really very simple. The fiends just place pools of acid or empty rooms with quickly closing walls throughout the fortress. When a berk teleports in blind, he's got just as much a chance to end up in the trap as a real room. They're real useful at discouraging such incursions.

In fact, the only advantage to teleporting into the heart of a citadel is if some valuable target (leaders, plans, supplies, prisoners, etc.) can be taken, killed, or destroyed. Since the offensive forces have to teleport in blind, only luck will allow such a find to occur, and because the baatezu have compartmentalized their fortress to such a degree, even a lucky find can never be reached by a large force, and by the time that word reaches the commanders and the attackers concentrate their reinforcements in the area, the lucky find is usually moved.

That's why stag-turners are such a danger. If the enemy isn't teleporting blind — if they know where they're going — the defenders are in real trouble. That's what Xoun really wanted us to scout out — he was looking for some basher who'd give him the dark of the interior of the fortress for a little (or a lot of) garnish. Didn't work, though, and the tanar'ri assailed the place anyway. They got slaughtered. It wasn't until the tanar'ri sacrificed the majority of their forces in a mass suicide charge at the base of the fortress, eventually toppling it (right onto their own remaining troops no less), that

the battle ended. And the tanar'ri looked upon that as a victory. That's Abyssal thinking for you. But I didn't care. I got my jink and took my leave.

I've heard that in Baator itself, there are fiendish citadels with no doors at all. Every room has to be reached by teleportation. Chant is, there are ways in such places for non-fiends to teleport around too, since we weren't all born with that ability. I can't even imagine how hard it would be to attack such a place. If you sent your troops in, even if they were winning, they could never link up to coordinate their movements or concentrate their attacks. What a nightmare. And I'm sure that's the idea.

The baatezu like fortresses so much that they tortured their engineers into making some so that they could be used on the offense as well as the defense. These mobile fortresses are on huge wheels or rollers and are powered by some eldritch mechanisms that probably involve the backs of thousands of slaves in some fashion, if I know the baatezu like I do. Not only do they transport troops but they literally roll right over the enemy.

The tanar'ri

Tanar'ri fortresses are fewer than those of their foemen, but they're no less terrible to assault. As a body might expect, there's no rhyme or reason to the way that they are built — that's actually one of their main defenses. To most folk, but in particular to the orderly baatezu, tanar'ri fortresses make no sense.

There was a time I worked for the yugoloths, who were working for the baatezu (at the time, that is — it's complicated). This ride took us to some layer of the Abyss, looking for a kidnapped erinyes that was being held for ransom by some minor tanar'ri lord. In any event, we discovered her on a floating fortress high above the rest of the layer.

This was an old tanar'ri tactic — but one they still use today. They use powerful enchantments to hoist their citadels high in the air. The inhabitants of such places use flying mounts like hieracosphinxes or giant bats or whatever's at hand to get up there if they can't fly on their own or teleport. In this particular case they used what appeared to be gigantic blue hornets. These were very effective combat mounts, as they could hover to allow accurate missile combat as well as defend themselves with their stingers... but you didn't come to me to learn about bugs.

Anyway, some of the 'loths I was working with could fly, while the rest of us (my human mercenary company and the non-flyer yugoloths) "acquired" some of the giant hornets. When we flew up at the fortress, however, we learned that we'd fallen right into a tanar'ri trap. They're chaotic, not addle-coved. A floating fortress needs to be prepared against airborne attack, and prepared they were. Powerful, magical winds generated from within the citadel tossed us about, sending many down to the ground and the dead-book. Like many tanar'ri strongholds, this one was warded against teleportation, so none of the yugoloths could slip in that way either.

Tanar'ri sorcerers apparently have been tinkering with powerful teleport wards for some time. Sometimes they work, and sometimes they don't, but it seems there's always a new wrinkle to this magic that the fiends have uncovered. Chant is that the baatezu gave up on this sort of enchantment long ago because it is unreliable, but the tanar'ri have made a successful enough stab at it to bring tears of regret to baatezu eyes. No teleportation means a more straightforward clash, with less strategy and more bloodshed — just the way the tanar'ri like it.

It takes no graybeard to guess that we lost that day. I was lucky to escape alive. I don't know what the inside of that fortress contained, but if I know tanar'ri, it was worse than what we encountered on the out-

entire decoy fortresses. Whole installations, manned with troops and everything, that are complete ruses. This peel is capped by the existence of the real fortress nearby. A body'll find that the actual case is hidden by magic, disguised as a natural feature, deep under a nearby sea, or buried far below the surface. (I once heard of one that was thousands of miles down on some Abyssal layer where the tunnels went on forever. For those of us sods who don't like bashing around underground, that place is a real nightmare — imagine the months it would take to get down there, and the traps in those passages leading down to that place.)

Most horrible of all, however, the tanar'ri sometimes imbue their fortresses with sentience. Through some unknown process, they give their fortresses life. Maybe it's some extension of the ability of the tanar'ri to advance (or be promoted) from one form to the next higher. Maybe sometimes a lesser fiend is altered into what appears to be a stronghold. Such places are often characterized by eyes, limbs, and even mouths seemingly built into the walls, floors or ceilings. Such structures have practically unbeatable alarm systems, since the fortress itself can detect a cross-trader attempting to sneak in, and can warn the inhabitants.

'Course, a few planewalkers have tumbled to ways to combat these living defenses. The whole fortress, as big as it might be, has a single mind — at least, the ones I've heard of do. If a body can get past the fiend's resistance to magic, a well-phrased suggestion, charm or other mind-influencing spell can take care of all your worries. Further, I've heard of one blood that somehow introduced a fiendish disease into the tanar'ri fortress, slaying it outright.

On the prime

Sometimes the Blood War, it's said, spills over into the Prime Material Plane. What folks mean by this is that sometimes one side or the other

(or both) find that it's important to go to the Prime to gain some important item, tumble to some vital chant, stop the other from doing some deed, or some-

Teleport ward

(Wild magic)

Level 6 Wizard Spell

Range: 0

Duration: 1 hour per level

Area of Effect: five 10' cubes per level

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 6

Saving Throw: None

This is one of many such spells developed by tanar'ri wizards in an attempt to protect their strongholds from magical infiltration by their enemies. It essentially blocks teleport, *dimension door*, and similar spells within the area of effect for the duration. Further, those attempting entrance have only half their normal chance to overcome the spell using magic resistance.

Unfortunately, this wild magic spell is very unreliable. The block usually works both ways — casters can neither enter or exit the area using such spells. When the spell is cast, use the following chart:

1d100	
01-10	Failure (wild magic surge results)
11-60	Both ways blocked
61-90	Affected spells restricted only in entering the area
91-99	Affected spells restricted only in exiting the area
00	All non-permanent spells restricted in the area

thing else. These incursions don't usually last long, and (what most Clueless don't believe) the fiends usually aren't much interested in mixing it up with the local primes if they don't have to. Sure, sometimes a few rogues or two'll head to a Prime Material World to cause some havoc and bloodshed, but those focused on the Blood War don't have time for fun like that.

So, the fiends never stay long. This means that there's not time to build defenses or castles. In such cases as they're needed, then, baatezu and tanar'ri both use the same tactic — they confiscate an already-existing fortress. Either through force (often in the case of the tanar'ri) or guile (the baatezu) the fiends take the castle of local humans, elves, dwarves, orcs, or whatever. They don't care about the alignments of the former inhabitants — they're only interested in the strategic value of the bastion.

RIVERS OF ACID?
BOILING SKIES?
POISONOUS SOIL —
ALL ON THE ABYSS?

YOU GO + OFF EASY, BERK.
—TERREK
NORS+RO

side.

The tanar'ri fortresses I've seen are always different, but always terrible.

An old Baatezu trick, again playing off of their teleport traps and compartmentalized fortresses, was to leak false information and create phoney decoy maps to trick foes into teleporting into the wrong areas. Well, the tanar'ri often take this idea a step further and create

Even more than on their home planes, fiends on the Prime use other creatures as guards and troops. Sometimes a tricky baatezu high up'll strike up a deal with a dragon, and in exchange for some treasure, the dragon lets the baatezu forces stay with it in its lair for a time. Hardly a safer spot on a Prime world than that, eh, berk? More often, however, the planar invaders subjugate lesser races such as orcs, goblins, or trolls and monsters such as basilisks, wyverns, chimerae, medusae, giant insects, etc., then use them to defend their holds. When in the cavernous underworld (where, unknown to most bashers, many baatezu and tanar'ri incursions take place), they make alliances with the dark elves, the mind flayers, or the aboleths. Any of these creatures can be found in a fiend's Prime fortress.

When the local primes discover a small army of Lower Planar creatures living in a nearby fortress, they usually launch a holy war against the place. Fiends have no time for crusades against them, and so they usually leave after a few of these assaults (unless the attacks are not a threat or are particularly entertaining). Thus, the taking of a fortress on the Prime is usually done with as much secrecy as possible — for fear of being exposed to the real threat, their Blood War foes. Whatever the outcome, such incidents are surely the thing of which legends are made on these backwater Prime Material Plane worlds.

A word of advice to planewalkers

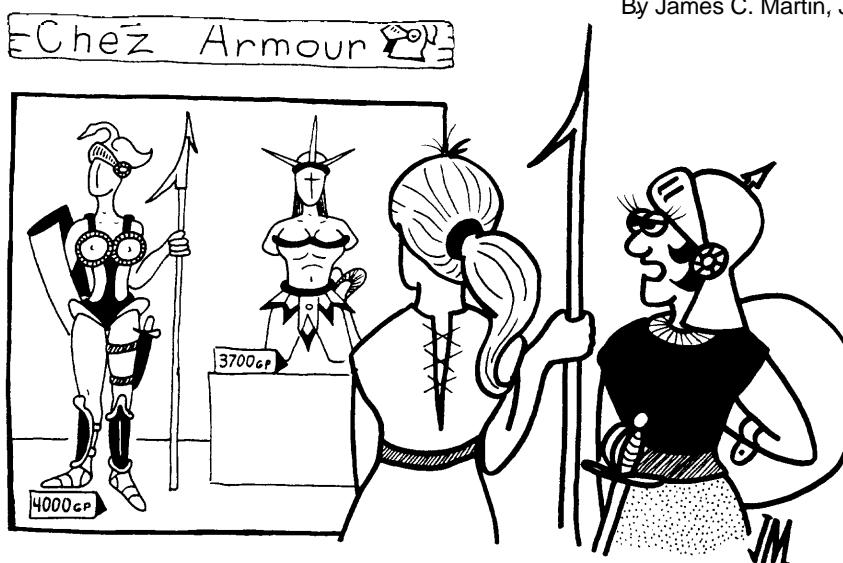
Those of you self-styled adventurers who go flitting about the planes in search of a little jink and a lot of notoriety, take heed. I'm only going to say this once. You're going to run into the Blood War at some time during your travels — that's a given. So be prepared.

A body needs to know who's who and what's what. A canny blood'll keep in mind the nature of the conflict, as well. Though it might appear to be, this isn't a war fighting over land. Sure, the fiends take and re-take plots of ground on the various Lower Planes all the time. They even build all the above-mentioned fortresses to hold that ground. But the real dark is this: it's a war fought over ideals. The baatezu and the tanar'ri fight to see the ultimate extinction of the other for one reason — because they each stand for and exemplify beliefs that the other despises. It's a true struggle of law versus chaos. It's a fight to see what "brand" of evil is the superior. As terrible as the war is, woe to the multiverse if one side ever actually wins, 'cause where do you think the victor's sights are going to fall if that happens, berk?



The only court that Monte Cook has ever visited is traffic court. Nonetheless, he earns his living writing about much more fantastical things at TSR, so he is content.

By James C. Martin, Jr



"Why do I feel that all armor designers are male?"

Tanar'ri living fortresses

Lesser Tanar'ri

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: N/A

FREQUENCY: N/A

ORGANIZATION: N/A

DIET: N/A

INTELLIGENCE: Low to Average (5-10)

TREASURE: Nil

NO. APPEARING: 1

ARMOR CLASS: 10

MOVEMENT: N/A

HIT DICE: 15-20

THAC0: 5

NO. OF ATTACKS: 1d6

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 3d4

SPECIAL ATTACKS: Nil (see below)

SPECIAL DEFENSES: See below

MAGIC RESISTANCE: 50%

SIZE: varies

MORALE: N/A

XP VALUE: 12,000 to 17,000

Living fortresses are impossible to harm through normal attacks — only area of effect attacks inflict damage upon them. They fight by means of manifesting 1d6 clawed limbs which extrude from the walls, floors and ceilings (wherever needed). These limbs can be harmed by normal weapons, and are destroyed after sustaining 30 hp damage. A fortress can only have as many limbs as it has HD, so the loss of one of these members is not inconsequential. The fortress can sense activity of any kind within its own confines and within 50' of its outer perimeter.

They can't move or flee, so they have no movement or morale ratings. The entire fortress has the same sorts of special defenses and abilities as a normal tanar'ri, except that they cannot teleport. This means that a living fortress can use the following spell-like abilities at will (once per round): darkness 10' radius, and infravision. Further, it can gate 3-18 least tanar'ri 3 times/day with a 40% chance of success. Like all tanar'ri, these fiends sustain half damage only from cold, fire and gas attacks. Further, electricity, non-magical fire, and poison do them no harm (so they're incredibly hard to slay).



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6:07 PM	Jim Scott eats two bowls of chili.
8:24 PM	Feels chest pains. Thinks it's indigestion.
10:13 PM	Ignores family's advice to get help. Goes to bed.
12:53 AM	Chest pain continues. Can't sleep.
2:41 AM	Suffers heart attack.
3:19 AM	Dies in ambulance.

Too many Americans die every year because they don't get help at the first sign of a heart attack.

If you don't seek medical help because you'll be embarrassed if it's nothing . . . think about how much worse it will be if you don't get help, and it's something.

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SETTING

CLAUGIYLIAMATAR

"Old Gnawbone"

by Ed Greenwood

illustrated by Storn Cook

The Volo and Elminster survey of current dragon rulers of the North continues with one of the most infamous hero-banes in all Faerûn: the vicious, nasty, venerable green dragon known as Claugiyliamatar. This wyrm delights in hunting down and slaughtering small armed bands wandering in the wilderlands (in other words: adventurers). From time to time she varies such activities with devouring a field of almost-ripe grain in Goldenfields or tearing apart a food-caravan bound for the northern interior and eating men, beasts, and cargo alike. Claugiyliamatar usually signals this last sort of triumph by plucking up a caravan wagon, flying very high (to avoid the attention of griffon-back City patrols until it's too late), and dropping the wagon down as a lethal missile on the roofs of Waterdeep.

Some ballads call Claugiyliamatar "Old Gnawbone" for her habit of carrying a corpse dangling from her jaws to munch on absently from time to time, just as some humans suck on unlit pipes or chew cigars. She is cunning, paranoid, and possessed of a cruel sense of humor: trapped victims have been known to

escape her because she played with them to watch their pain and suffering instead of slaughtering them outright.

Claugiyliamatar lives alone, driving away male green dragons who come courting, but she has always been rumored to employ several dozen loyal human and halfling agents to work behind the scenes for her in the less savory side of business in Neverwinter and Waterdeep. In particular, these agents make profits on goods made scarce by the dragon's attacks. Old Gnawbone seems to enjoy manipulating affairs in the cities for the sake of wielding secret power, not for the wealth it brings her. Little treasure is brought back to her lair; all but the the coins pocketed by her agents — misdemeanors Claugiyliamatar pointedly ignores if the amounts stay small — is invested in businesses meant to stir up rivalries and gain her ever-more-powerful organizations, allowing her more swiftly and thoroughly to create trouble in her next scheme!

Claugiyliamatar is fascinated by human and elven women who wield power, and she spends hours watching them from her lair through her array of *crystal balls*. This collection of scrying

spheres marks the second thing that fascinates Claugiyliamatar: magic, especially items that allow her to take human form and participate in the things humans do (knifings in alleyways, for example, and passionate courting, and, well, drinking). Her personal spells are too weak to enable her to take human shape, so she watches the nobles of Waterdeep and the sorceresses of Neverwinter for hours at a time, learning who has magic and where it is hidden, before sending her agents forth to steal it. Woe betide an agent who tries to cheat Old Gnawbone out of even the tiniest scrap of magic: he will find himself nailed to a tree deep in the forest, drenched with blood, and left for the wolves (or other hungry forest denizens).

Claugiyliamatar herself hungers for the bustle and intrigue of city life in the form of a human, but able to call on her full range of dragon powers. She was almost tricked into servitude once by a wizard, Hyrix Greentree of Waterdeep, whom she hired to craft her a shape-change spell. The magic would have transformed her into a beautiful human maiden, yet leave her able to call on her magic, breath weapon, and immunities. She discovered, however, that while in

human form she would have been Hyrix's charmed slave, and he would have ensured that her desire to return to dragon-shape was firmly quenched. Hyrix died slowly and painfully, and if the phantom of a screaming wizard silently fades into view from time to time above the spell scroll Claugiyliamatar keeps carefully hidden in a coffer beneath the floor of her lair, she ignores it.

Having her own way is everything to Claugiyliamatar. Among other dragons, her reputation for trickery makes her best avoided. Balagos, for instance, considers her a twisted, crabbed thing given to petty silliness and, as such, beneath his notice.

She is a tireless foe who goes to ridiculous lengths to cause even small harm to someone she regards as an enemy, and this "worry-all-the-bones" trait has made most other dragons leave her alone. This is just fine with Old Gnawbone, as it leaves her free to pursue her schemes wrapped in the presumption of her own supremacy over other dragons. It also leaves her great Waterdeep as part of her territory. That more than a dozen steel dragons and weredragons dwell in the city under her very nose, and generally regard her activities with amusement, is something she serenely ignores, even when one of her agents is imprudent enough to point it out to her.

How those in authority — in particular, women of power — wield their influence and legal might is something Claugiyliamatar never tires of studying. Increasingly she has turned to scrying Alustriel's Palace in Silverymoon, and even distant Twilight Hall in Berdusk. She seems unaware that her snooping was detected long ago in both of those places. Junior mages in both cities now take turns honing their illusion-weaving skills by spinning false scenes of intrigue for the green dragon to watch. The impish mage Ralderston Tinter of Silverymoon has even taken to crafting scenes of a handsome young green dragon who takes on human form to court ladies of high station. It has been observed that Claugiyliamatar's agents are visiting Silverymoon in a steady stream these days, looking for a certain young man with the emerald eyes of a shapechanged green dragon.

Certain mages of Silverymoon have been weaving spells that can be covertly cast on an unwitting agent, to be triggered by Old Gnawbone's presence: spells made to plunge the green dragon

into a long, heavy slumber, so adventurers can safely reach her lair for a massed attack. So far, the castings they've attempted have failed. For her part, Claugiyliamatar seems not to have noticed. She has explained away the occasional clumsy images and distortions she observes through her *crystal balls* as defensive magics her scrying is penetrating.

Claugiyliamatar's lair

Old Gnawbone lairs in a cavern in Kryptgarden Forest, at the end of a deep ravine that runs from the base of one of the mountains that bounds the old, thickly-grown woods on the north. Several tombs and abandoned dwarf-holds pierce the mountain walls nearby, including the infamous monster-haunted complex known as Southkrypt. Claugiyliamatar employs both human agents and woodland creatures as guards around her lair, to lead intruders astray (sometimes with the aid of *audible glamers* and other spells she casts herself) into waiting traps or into one of the waiting perils of another cave.

The green dragon doesn't seem to have a name for her abode, but to humans its Deeping Cave, a name of forgotten origin that it possessed long before Claugiyliamatar arrived (in 1303 DR, most sages believe).

The cave gapes at the end of a gloomy, vine-crossed gully overhung by gigantic old oaks and duskwoods. Within, Old Gnawbone's lair is a weird place of creeping phosphorescent lichens, giant toadstools, and hanging mosses draped over statues of imperious human women (warriors, mostly) looted from a dozen tombs.

At the back of the cave, Claugiyliamatar slithers about in the gloom from her bed of coins to the alcove where her *crystal balls* glow and flicker. She often spends hours sprawled before them, watching what befalls far away, while a servant (always a man clad only in manacles and chains, though these are a decorative costume he can remove whenever desired) oils her soft scales with tree-sap and ointments made to the dragon's own formulae from crushed and boiled forest leaves, fungi, and roots.

Claugiyliamatar is vain and believes she will stay youthful and supple if her scales are tended daily, polished with these healthy substances to a deep, almost blue emerald hue. Those who anoint her are allowed to scoop up as many coins they can grasp in one hand

(only!) from her hoard-bed as payment when they leave. Thus, attending the dragon is a popular duty among her servants — though one must be careful to do nothing to make Old Gnawbone suspect treachery; she's been known to roll over with sudden, deliberate speed and crush a servant beneath her bulk.

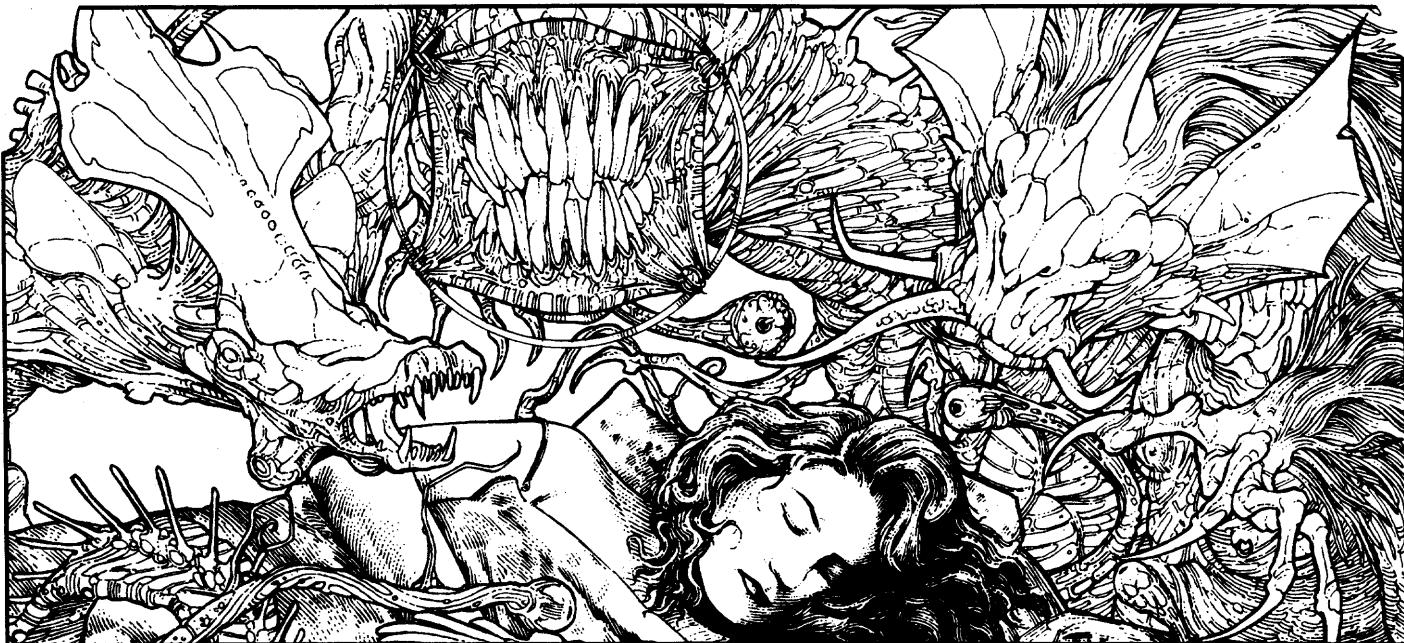
Claugiyliamatar's domain

From Deeping Cave, Claugiyliamatar holds sway over a dominion that stretches from the southern bank of the River Mirar down the Sword Coast to the north bank of the Dessarin, and along the western fringes of the High Forest to about Dead Horse Ford, where it swings north and west in a wide arc over the Evermoors to take in Nesmé, Longsaddle, and Grunwald, to reach the Mirar south of Mirabar. If all of the borders of her territory are disputed by other dragons (particularly northern Neverwinter Wood and the land between the Dessarin and the High Forest) and her ability to waltz into Waterdeep is more fantasy than something she dares do, Claugiyliamatar cares not. She rarely flies anywhere east of the Long Road and seldom leaves her lair in any case, preferring to watch through her scrying-crystals and have agents work for her. (Those servants who contemplate treachery have learned to their cost that she does on occasion closely watch just how they carry out her orders). This habitual idleness does not keep her from jealously defending her dominion when young dragons scout it — and, seeing no draconic occupant, decide to settle in.

Lance Rock, a landmark west of the Long Road south of Red Larch, looks as if a gigantic boulder were hurled down from the sky to strike deep into the ground — and that's just what happened. A brash young adult red dragon, Smergadas, liked the look of the lands around the Dessarin. After flying about unchallenged for most of a day, he filled his belly with roaming deer and curled up for a nap — whereupon Old Gnawbone, who'd been watching him through one of her crystals, emerged from her lair, plucked a loose boulder almost as large as herself from atop the mountains, and flew over to drop it on him. Then she landed to fill her own belly with foolish red dragon.

The deeds of Claugiyliamatar

The favorite prey of Claugiyliamatar is adventurers, particularly human males, but she does enjoy the taste of



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dragon-meat. When orc hordes sweep down from the mountains, Claugiyliamatar emerges from her lair and gorges herself, devouring the goblinkin by the hundreds until, too bloated to fight any more, she labors back to her lair and crawls inside to sleep off her feast. Sages have identified such occasions as the time when she's most vulnerable. Of course, when orcs are streaming by the thousands down into the lands of civilized men, dragon-hunting is a luxury no one can afford.

Claugiyliamatar prefers to hunt between Westwood and Kryptgarden Forest (on deer, cattle, or human travelers that she can catch in the open), or if she's feeling more energetic, in Neverwinter Wood south of the river. She drinks from the mountain streams that empty into the Mere of Dead Men, or sometimes from the moor-mid lake that feeds the Laughingflow, or the Dessarin itself. Most of her days are spent scrying and sleeping but she can break her sloth with periods of agile, lightning-quick flight and fighting if need be.

Adventurers know Claugiyliamatar for the grim toll of their ranks she's exacted down the years, and in particular for the time she posed as a silver dragon to dupe a Waterdhavian noble (the late Saerlin Brokengulf, head of his house at the time). In her disguise, she tricked Saerlin into hiring her to rid the Brokengulf grazing lands of herself. She learned through scrying where her payment was being assembled, used magic to appear as a silver dragon again, and in that guise destroyed the place, seizing all the coins and devouring all the guards, and then flew to the Brokengulf ranch and used illusions to make it seem as though a titanic midair battle was being fought by a silver dragon and a green. In the process, she smashed fences, allowing the terrified livestock to flee out into the open grasslands for her later dining pleasure. The battling dragons disappeared west over the mountains, and a battered and angry silver dragon subsequently perched atop the Brokengulf abode in Waterdeep and demanded the payment for slaying Claugiyliamatar. Lord Brokengulf had to scramble to find alternative funds (as the silver dragon made it clear the alternative was to lose the house the wyrm sat upon), and the silver dragon flew away straining to hold aloft a Brokengulf boat plucked up from the harbor and crammed full of coins.

Old Gnawbone spent a leisurely ten-day arranging coins in several hidden

mountain caches (emptying her bed in Deeping Cave), then reappeared at Brokengulf Towers as herself — just as angry, and demanding twice the payment the "Silver Slayer" had received to spare the lives of the entire Brokengulf family. When Lord Brokengulf played for time (trying hastily to hire a wizard to blast away his dragon troubles forever), Claugiyliamatar toppled the grandest tower of the villa down into its garden, crushing three of Lord Brokengulf's sisters and crippling Saerlin himself. She got her payment, though it almost emptied the coffers of the noble house. Then she flew happily back to her cave, after wrecking the rest of the villa almost as an afterthought. She then set all the traps she'd prepared and went off with the loot to Neverwinter Wood to hide while all the angry forces of Waterdeep scoured Kryptgarden for a dragon so bold as to dare to attack a noble of the city in his very home!

The crowning stroke in Claugiyliamatar's plan was her timing of the whole affair to coincide with the first cautious foray into her forest of Endracritar, a rival green dragon from the High Forest near Loudwater. A young male already fearful of the forces of Hellgate Keep, Endracritar had been growing increasingly wary of Zhentariim incursions near his own lair, and he had been preparing spells and stratagems for a decisive attack on Claugiyliamatar for some time. Unbeknownst to him, Old, Gnawbone had been scrying on him regularly for some time, too — as she did all the dragons she could find except Balagos, whom she didn't quite dare to watch — and knew all about his plan. The strike force from Waterdeep charged into the Kryptgarden looking for a rapacious green dragon... and they found one.

Endracritar's vaunted spells and stratagems were no match for the fury of the assembled mages and heroes of Waterdeep. The smoke had barely ceased to drift and curl from his blasted bones when Claugiyliamatar glided calmly back across the mountains and returned to her cave, bringing her best crystal ball with her. It was time to spy on another noble family, to find something else she could exploit for enrichment, power, and pleasure.

Claugiyliamatar may acknowledge her physical and magical inferiority to other dragons (such as Balagos), but her behavior and occasional comments to agents reveal that she thinks herself

smarter than all other dragons, able to manipulate other beings to gain her own way in situations where rival wyrms can only charge in and fight or lay waste to the surroundings, to achieve their ends by force. Lack of sufficient magic is the only real weakness she seems to be working at rectifying; however, her paranoia makes finding wizards mighty enough to develop a roster of powerful verbal-only spells for her, and to enable her to shift freely between dragon-form and human shape, a very difficult task indeed. She's recently come to the conclusion that the only way to find such a being may be to raise one herself — to "adopt" a magically-gifted and good-aligned child as a mysterious, helpful benefactor, helping the human to grow into a mage of power who regards Claugiyliamatar as a friend whom he owes a tremendous debt. Yet even this long, exacting process is fraught with perils, and Old Gnawbone is proceeding very cautiously, scrying until she can find a handful of candidates. If one turns on her, is slain, or otherwise "goes bad," she'll then have others without all her time entirely wasted... and if all of them come to trust her and to master magic, she'll have more wizards at her beck and call than most emperors in the Realms ever manage!

Claugiyliamatar has little use for other dragons. She feels that mating will only delay or destroy her schemes, forcing her to rear offspring who'll inevitably turn on her as they grow up, and give a male dragon entirely too much knowledge of her lair, defenses, and nature. Fear can win the loyalty of lesser creatures, however, and Claugiyliamatar is satisfied that very few of her carefully-selected human agents ever cross her and live to tell the tale. She holds no special likes or dislikes of any species, but she finds humans both fascinating and useful, their wits and dexterity almost the equal of a dragon's.

In recent seasons, word of her existence seems to be spreading slowly in Waterdeep, and more adventurers and young, bored nobles gone a-hunting have arrived in her forest; Claugiyliamatar has enjoyed taking the magic that these puny foes carry, but she is growing alarmed that folk of real power (such as the Lord Mage of Waterdeep, Khelben "Blackstaff" Arunsun) will eventually show up, so she is working hard at having her agents eliminate folk who spread rumors of her. The flattery of a good ballad, in particular one that

speaks of a deadly green dragon coiling triumphant about Kryptgarden "long ago," would be more welcome...

So Old Gnawbone lies in her cave, watching the schemes and deeds and unfolding lives of humans in bright Waterdeep and the other settlements of the North, striving to become ever more subtle in what she bids her agents do, so that her power will grow even as knowledge of her wanes. She is close to danger, but if she can keep out of its reach, there are centuries yet to grow mighty — and a city just pulsing with magic just beyond her very snout... magic that might all someday be hers.

Claugiyliamatar's magic

The Dragon of Kryptgarden Forest considers her roster of spells puny, but she has a few useful magics, including the two spells detailed here.

It should be noted that Claugiyliamatar has acquired and uses first-level wizardly equivalents of many minor plant and wood-related magic customarily associated with druids.

Talons (Evocation)

Level: 2

Range: 90 yards

Components: V

Duration: 5 rounds

Casting Time: 2 (1 for Claugiyliamatar)

Area of Effect: One creature

Saving Throw: 1/2

This spell creates a translucent line of four black foot-long, razor-sharp nails that appear in front of a single creature and slash at the target once per round, floating along to accompany the victim. The talons strike unerringly, once per round, dealing 2d6 hp damage unless the target being successfully saves for half damage. Note that a *talons* spell prevents a target from casting any spell except verbal-only magics or other spells that take only one segment.

A *dispel magic* spell causes the talons to fade away instantly, and a *shield* spell prevents them from attacking for one round (as they destroy the *shield*). Stronger magical barriers slow them for two rounds before failing. An antimagic shell blocks them completely.

The target of a *talons* spell can't be changed once chosen; the spell ends if the target dies and can be ended prema-

turely if its caster wills it — but it requires no continued concentration to maintain (i.e. the caster can initiate other spellcasting once a *talons* spell is unleashed upon its target, without affecting the talons). The talons follow a target who flees (even if this flight is by means of a teleport), unless this results in movement to another plane of existence.

Vaeladaunce (Evocation)

Level: 2

Range: 30 yds.

Components: V

Duration: 1 round

Casting Time: 2 (1 for Claugiyliamatar)

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: Special

This spell creates a sudden jet of flaming gas that appears out of thin air at a location chosen by the caster. The location must be one that the caster can see directly during spellcasting. The jet spews in a direction the caster desires before fading away as suddenly as it was born.

The gas jet is cylindrical, 6' across and 60' long. Any being coming into contact with it (Dexterity checks for classed characters to avoid, and saving throws vs. spell for other beings, if the situation allows avoidance) suffers 4d4 hp fiery damage unless immune to, or protected against, harm from fire. In addition, creatures who breathe (that is, most beings who aren't undead), must save vs. breath weapon or take an additional 2d12 hp internal fiery damage from breathing the flaming gas. Certain barriers cause the gas jet to rebound, and a *gust of wind* deflects it, but the DM must adjudicate such situations.

A *vaeladaunce* ignites most paper and alcoholic substances, and some textiles (all such items should make saving throws vs. magical fire), but it is too sudden and brief to affect other materials.

Claugiyliamatar's fate

The Dragon of Kryptgarden Forest dwells too near Waterdeep ever to be truly safe, and if civilization grows in the North as most sages expect it to, and settlement spreads up the coast or (more likely) up the Long Road, Claugiyliamatar is likely to be discovered with increasing regularity, and tested by band after band of adventurers. Eventually one will be too strong for her,

or too lucky — or her continuing slaughter of them will bring a foe she can't defeat to her door.

She could relocate, of course, but Neverwinter Wood is too cold for her liking and probably soon to be a territory where younger dragons regularly show up to make challenges (to say nothing of the white dragon Arveiaturace). The High Forest, with at least three incumbent green dragons,¹ is likely to become her grave if she dares try to lair there. Claugiyliamatar knows of these perils and would prefer to be able to slip away from unwanted foes by taking human shape, or otherwise having magic enough to prevail against even the mightiest foes.

If she can see a way to achieve undeath herself, without the meddling, manipulative aid of the Cult of the Dragon, she may very well do so: the removal of a need to eat and keep warm would allow her far more freedom, and she can continue to enjoy her chief pursuit and entertainment: spying on humans and demi-humans, and manipulating their affairs just to enjoy her power over them.

Sometimes, though, she dreams of an even better fate: ruling Waterdeep as a human queen, her dragon nature hidden. Even more often, she sees herself as an alluring, mysterious lady all the noblemen and ambitious merchants of the city are wild over, as she glides from dark alley trysts to gentle jests at parties, with all eyes on her and all tongues darting with the news of her latest outrageous deeds. Her servants say Old Gnawbone sighs often as she stares into her *crystal bulls*...



Ed Green wood owns four computers, almost a hundred thousand books, a lovely old house, curs, bouts, and cottages in the Canadian wilderness. He'd trade them all for a chance to spend a day in Shadowdale — or a night at a nobles' revel in Waterdeep.

1. According to Elminster (volo knows nothing of this, having never ventured into the depths of "the Great Everwood"), three mighty green dragons dwell in the High Forest: the males Elaerimalicros and Grimnoshtadrano, "the Riddling Dragon," and the female dragon Chloracidara. More about these three can be gleaned from *The North* boxed set, and Grimnoshtadrano also appears in the novel *Elfsong* by Elaine Cunningham (TSR, Inc., 1994).

Court

Continued from page 13

many proficiency checks are required to make the operation successful for the PCs who are involved.

Public appearance, opening, dedication, or inspection

The ruler appears in public. If a PC is chosen to make a few opening remarks, he makes an etiquette and oration roll. If both rolls succeed, he makes an impression. If both fail, he blunders.

Reception, presentation, demonstration, or report

A character is selected to appear before the court. Three proficiency checks are needed: one for oratory, one for etiquette, and one related to the area he will discuss (drop the third roll for social occasions). Two or more failures indicate a blunder; three successes make an impression.

Sports and contests

Sports such as tennis, golf, skittles (bowling), darts, track and field events,

horse racing, wrestling, and others, are appreciated at court. A PC may participate by using his running, riding, swimming, jumping, or other appropriate proficiencies. Members of the court often bet on sporting events. Winners make an impression.

Tournament, joust, or melee

The court enjoys feasts of arms performed by valiant knights. Mock Combat can be judged by using normal combat rules with damage being non-lethal. Winners make impressions and win prizes.

Trial or judgment

The support of justice is a primary responsibility of government. Important national issues may also be settled by the courts, certain criminal laws enforced, and disputes between important nobles adjudicated. The ruler or his proxy acts as judge.

The royal court is only concerned with major crimes, including treason, rebellion, or anything that undermines the welfare of the realm and the ruler's status. Treachery may be dealt with by the ruler in a private fashion, with the

accused later receiving a show trial when sufficient evidence has been obtained against him (after a stay in the dungeons, perhaps).

Some cases, however, involve controversial issues or popular persons. Under these circumstances, the ruler will convene a court of nobles and justices to settle the case. Conflict between nobles are also brought before a jury of peers. There are several ways in which a PC might be involved in a case: first as a defendant, second as juror or judge, and third as a prosecutor or defending counsel.

If a PC is a defendant, he or his attorney can use law and oratory rolls to sway the court. These proficiencies won't change the facts in the case but may manage to win acquittal for the PC on a technicality, or perhaps reduce the severity of a sentence. As a juror or judge, the PC votes against the ruler's will or public opinion at his own risk. Bribes might be used to gain his support.

If a character is acting as counsel, winning the case makes an impression.

Uproar

Uproar involves outrageous behavior, scandals, murder, accidents, discovery of a spy, thievery, duels, use of illicit magic, or anything that upsets the court routine. PCs implicated in an uproar make a blunder until they clear themselves. An uproar also occurs when the ruler is in a foul mood. No impressions may be made, and anyone who blunders is likely to be banished, disgraced, thrown in the dungeon, or executed.

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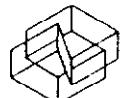
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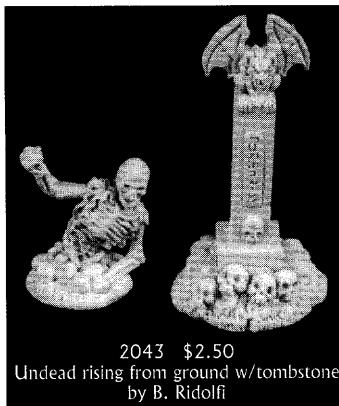
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Campaign Classics



Scions of the Desert

by Jim Parks

illustrated by William O'Connor

Zakhara is the Land of Fate, where the humblest beggar might actually be a prince. The dashing corsair could turn out to be heir to a kingdom, or the insane barber the heir to a throne. The *rawuns*, or storytellers, sing of such things. But can they really be true? We have no fate but that we are given!

In adapting the BIRTHRIGHT® system of domain rulership for the AL-QADIM® setting, we can indeed play characters who descend from noble lines and rise to become great sheiks, sultans, or caliphs. The BIRTHRIGHT system gives us the means to do so. Imagine that each city-state of Zakhara becomes a domain, like the smaller domains of Endier or Ilien in Cerilia. Caravan and sea routes connect exotic guild holdings. Mosques and temples form networks of temple holdings, which Holy Slayers and Mystic Groups struggle to control. Enigmatic Sorcerous Societies control the magical sources found in isolated oases or in the shifting sands of the deep desert.

To make full use of the information provided, you must have the *Arabian Adventures* rulebook, the *Complete Sha'ir's Handbook*, and the *Land of Fate* and *City of Delights* boxed sets. You also need the BIRTHRIGHT boxed set.

Children of the Loregiver

The gods of Zakhara were not destroyed in an epic battle like that fought at Mount Deismaar in Cerilia, and they have not given the power of their blood to mortal men and women. Yet there are those in Zakhara whose blood

carries special power, and with it the right to rule the land and draw upon its power. These are the Children of the Loregiver.

It is not known whether the Loregiver actually had children. However, she did have seven followers: Anwarh, Rahman, Badiat, Basaia, Maneira, Umar, and Aasir. These followers were the Loregiver's companions and cousins. When the scrolls that revealed the Loregiver's teachings were discovered, the names of her followers were also revealed. As if to demonstrate the truth of the Loregiver's words, a wondrous transformation occurred among the Enlightened. Those who could trace descent to one of the Sharit, as the Children of the Loregiver and their descendants are known, began to manifest great power that flowed through their blood. By the power of their bond with the land and the will of the people, the Sharit soon came to rule the cities and tribes of the Land of Fate.

But all was not well among the Sharit. The blood of Aasir was tainted with evil, for he had coveted Fate's choice of the Loregiver. In a twist of Fate, his blood became cursed. Those strongly possessed of the blood of Aasir became warped by evil. Even their bodies became bestial, though possessed of no less power. It was the Sharit of Aasir's blood who first discovered that blood theft was possible. All blooded scions have learned to beware lest they be killed for the power that courses through their veins.

In game terms, blooded characters are related to one of the Children of the Loregiver. The seven Sharit correspond to the seven BIRTHRIGHT bloodlines — Anduiras (Anwar), Reynir (Rahman), Brenna (Badiat), Basaia (Basaia), Masela (Maneira), Vorynn (Umar) and Azrai (Aasir). Those possessed of Aasir's blood in Zakhara are like the awnsheghlien of Cerilia. However, they are known only as Abominations. Unlike Cerilian abominations, those in the Land of Fate do not transform into monstrosities so readily. Their evil is reflected in ugliness, bordering on the bestial, but they still appear essentially human. This more subtle, inner corruption reflects the spiritual corruption of Aasir.

Politics and warfare

Because Zakhara is a desert realm of nearly independent city-states bounded by vast deserts and trackless seas, the great armies that march across Cerilia are not found here. Battles are still waged but wars are less common. The land makes supporting large armies difficult. The presence of genies and the fantastic magics of the sorcerers and sha'irs make Zakhara a much more magic-rich land than Cerilia, with the result that wars are all the more devastating as well. In Zakhara, politics is war by other means.

Political conflict in the Land of Fate commonly takes the place of open warfare. When wars occur, they are brief. The venomous blade that strikes in the night, the softly whispered word that



shakes a kingdom, spies in perfumed silks —these are the weapons in the subtle wars of intrigue fought each day and in every court in Zakhara. Conquest is not always an obvious force. With control of a city's law, temple or guild holdings, who will say that your rule does not extend to that city? Without so much as a drawn sword, you are as surely the master of the city as is its sultan, who may come to you offering alliance or seeking your favor.

Players who attempt to sustain great armies over the vast reaches of Zakhara's deserts face obstacles unknown to regents in more temperate climates. Raids from desert tribesmen, who appear only to vanish into the desert after cutting your supply lines, dehydration and the need to find or transport great stores of water, and the constant scouring of wind and sand assails any army on the march. The DM should make these facts clear to the players and enforce the rules for desert survival in the *Arabian Adventures* rule-book. Without sufficient provisioning, each unit should roll on the dehydration table as if an individual character. Raiders and sandstorms should be determined as random events. For Zakhara to

retain its unique flavor, players must not be allowed to ignore the environment merely because they command armies. Even the mightiest sultan covers his head beneath the scorching desert sun.

Instead of marshalling armies to march out into the desert, a far better tactic is to infiltrate an enemy city. When all is in readiness, law holdings have been subverted, the populace incited to rise against the ruler, the support of the clergy and influential merchants secured, then your army strikes from within. To prevent such tactics, a Zakharian ruler must be ever vigilant of his domain and the happiness of his people, lest they be taken from him. This is warfare Zakharian style, handmaiden to politics.

The shariats

Each of the city-states or tribes ruled by one of the sharit is a domain, known as a shariat. Each domain is rated as if it were a single province domain in *BIRTHRIGHT*. Each shariat has a maximum rating of 10/10, reflecting a land of densely populated cities and one filled with fantastic magics.

The first number represents how developed the city or tribe is as

described in the *Land of Fate* boxed set. Because of the urban nature of much of Zakhara, the ratings for city-states are much higher than those commonly found in Cerilia. Similarly, tribal ratings are very low.

The second number represents how powerful the magic sources are in the area surrounding the city-state or tribe. This reflects the fact that once outside a city, the undisturbed vastness of the desert, or the boundless sea, stretches to the horizon. Just like other holdings, source holdings in a single city-state may be split among a number of regents.

All domain ratings in *AL-QADIM* use the *BIRTHRIGHT* rules for elven domains. The first number, or development rating, is separate from the second number, or source rating. One can be raised or lowered without affecting the other. This rule is in effect because the expanse of desert surrounding a city-state is largely unaffected by the development of the city, which depends on the availability of water. Arabian cities are extremely crowded and densely built up. They do not sprawl like modern cities because they are built around wells or other water sources. Where there is no water in the desert, there can be no cities.

Cities of the Heart

Domain	Law	Temples	Guilds	Sources
Halwa 4/4	CoH(2) DI(1) GCH(0) SA(1)	EV(2) WF(2)	KM(3) DF(1)	CN(1) ML(1) TF(1)

Holding Levels in the Land of Fate

Domain	Law	Temples	Guilds	Sources
Hiyal 9/3	SoH(9) GCH(0)	GP(7) FW(2)	DF(3) KM(2) YD(1)	CN(1) RE(1) TF(1)
Huzuz 10/3	GCH(4) DI(1) DN(1) FF(1) HR(1) SD(1) VL(1)	DW(2) RD(2) SW(2) EV(1) FD(1) FW(1) GP(1)	DF(4) KM(2) IK(1) MS(1) YD(1)	HG(1) TF(1) VZ(1) CN(0)
Wasat 5/2	CoW(2) SD(2) WD(1) GCH(0)	FW(3) GP(2)	DF(3) YD(1)	SW(2)

Cities of the Pearl

Ajayib 4/2	CoA(3) WD(1) GCH(0)	CM(2) GF(2)	DF(1) DL(1)	VZ(2)
Gana 5/2	SoG(4) WD(1) GCH(0)	CM(3) GF(2)	DL(2) DF(1)	SW(2)
Jumlat 7/3	SoJ(4) WD(2) DI(1) GCH(0)	GF(4) CM(2) EV(1)	DL(3) DF(2) MS(1)	SC(2) SZ(1)
Sikak 4/2	SoS(3) WD(1) GCH(0)	CM(2) GF(1) SW(1)	DF(3) DF(1)	RE(1) TF(1)

Cities of the Pantheon

Fahhas 5/2	CoF(2) DT(2)	SWD(3) DW(2)	DL(2) MS(1)	HB(2)
Hilm 6/2	CHH(2) EX(2) DI(1)	DW(3) SWD(2)	DL(1) MS(I)	SA(1) SS(1)

Hudid 5/2

CHD(3) DT(1)	SWD(3) FC(2)	DL(2) MS(2)	CN(2)
Eol(3) DT(2) EX(2)	SWD(3) FC(2) FD(1)	DL(3) MS(2)	HB(2)

I'tarif 7/2

Eol(3) DT(2) EX(2)	SWD(3) FC(2) FD(1)	DL(3) MS(2)	HB(2)
GCH(0)	SW(1)		

Mahabba 5/5

CMH(2) DT(1)	FC(3) FD(2)	MS(3) DL(1)	SA(3) TF(2)
EX(1) WD(1) GCH(0)			

Talab 4/5

CoT(2) PH(2) TF(2) GCH(0)	WF(3) RD(1)	MS(3)	SA(2) CS(1)

Cities of the Ancients

Domain	Law	Temples	Guilds	Sources
Dihliz 5/4	EoD(3) DI(2) GCH(0)	FC(5)	MS(3) IM(2) TF(1)	CN(1) SA(1)
Kadarasto 5/5	KoK(3) DV(2) GCH(0)	FD(3) FC(2)	IM(4) MS(1)	SA(3) ML(1) RE(1) VZ(1) TF(0)
Medina al-Afyal 6/5	PMA(4) WN(2) GCH(0)	CR(3) MN(3)	IM(2) MS(2)	VZ(2) CN(1) HB(1) SA(1)
Rog'osto 5/8	KoR(3) DI(2) GCH(0)	EV(3) FC(2)	IM(4) MS(1)	ML(2) TF(2) CS(1) RE(1) SS(1) SZ(1)

Tribes of the Haunted Lands

House of Hanif 3/10	SHF(3) GCH(0)	WF(3)	DF(1) KM(1) YD(1)	YK(4) CN(3) CS(2) TF(1)
House of Hotek 1/5	SHO(1) GCH(0)	DW(1)	DF(1) KM(0)	YK(2) CN(1) CS(1) RE(1)

Tribes of the High Desert

House of Asad 3/7	SHA(3) GCH(0)	DM(1) RD(1) WF(1)	DF(2) YD(1)	CS(3) SZ(2) HB(1) VZ(1)
House of Bakr 1/5	SHB(1) GCH(0)	SW(1)	DL(1)	TF(3) SZ(2)
House of Dhi'b 2/7	SHD(2) GCH(0)	WF(2)	DF(1) DL(1)	HB(2) VZ(2) CS(1) SA(1) TF(1)

House of Nasr 2/9	SHN(2) GCH(0)	DD(2)	DF(1) DL(1)	CS(3) HB(3) VZ(3)
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House of Tayif 1/10	SHT(1) GCH(0)	DD(2)	DF(1)	CS(2) HB(2) SS(2) TF(2) VZ(2)
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Holding Levels in the Land of Fate

Domain	Law	Temples	Guilds	Sources
House of Thawr 1/4	SHH(1) GCH(0)	DD(1)	MS(1)	RE(2) SS(2)
House of Uqab 2/6	SHU(1) GCH(0)	EV(2)	MS(1)	TF(6)

Abbreviations

Note: Abbreviations in the domain listings are ranked in decreasing order based on the size of the holding and alphabetically thereafter. The abbreviations below are listed alphabetically by holding type.

Law Holding Abbreviations: CHD — Caliph of Hudid, CHH — Caliph of Hilm, CHW — Council of Hawa, CMN — Caliph of Mahhaba, CoA — Caliph of Ajayib, CoF — Caliph of Fahhas, CoH — Caliph of Halwa, CoL — Caliph of Liham, CoM — Caliph of Muluk, CoT — Caliph of Talab, CoU — Caliph of Umara, CoW — Caliph of Wasat, CUQ — Caliph of Utqa, DD — Defenders Mamluks, DI — Dutiful Mamluks, DN — Dauntless Mamluks, DT — Devoted Mamluks, DV — Devout Mamluks, EoD — Emir of Dihliz, Eol — Emir of I'taraf, EX — Exalted Mamluks, FF — Faithful Mamluks, GCH — Grand Caliph of Huzuz, HR — Honored Mamluks, KoK — Khedive of Kadarasto, KoR — Khedive of Rog'osto, PH — Parched Mamluks, PMA — Padishah of Medina al-Afyal, PoH — Prince of Hafayah, RP — Respected Mamluks, SD — Studio Mamluks, SHA — Sheikh of House Asad, SHB — Sheikh of House Bakr, SHD — Sheikh of House Dhi'b, SHF — Sheikh of House Hanif, SHH — Sheikh of House Thawr, SHN — Sheikh of House Nasr, SHO — Sheikh of House Hotek, SHT — Sheikh of House Tayif, SHU — Sheikh of House Uqab, SoG — Sultan of Gana, SoH — Sultana of Hiyal, SoJ — Sultan of Jumlat, SoQ — Sultan of Qadib, SoS — Sultan of Sikak, SoT — Sultan of Tajar, VL — Valiant Mamluks, WD — Wanders Mamluks, WN — Wondrous Mamluks.

Temple Holding Abbreviations: CM — Chant Masters, CR — Court of Rhythm, DM — Dome Dancers, DW — Dancing Dwarves, EV — Everlasting, FC — Final Chord, FD — Flamedeath Fellowship, FW — Friendly Word, GF — Grey Fire, GP — Gilded Palm, MS — Moonspinners, RD — Readers, SW — Soft Whisper, SWD — Storm Which Destroys, WF — Wind of Fate, WO — Wrath of the Old,

Guild Holding Abbreviations: DF — Al-Danafi merchant family, DL — Al-Dalamari merchant family, IK — Al-Ikhusraru merchant family, KM — Al-Kamari merchant family, MS — Al-Misali merchant family, YD — Al-Yodfah merchant family.

Source Holding Abbreviations: CN — Constellation, CS — Cult of Sand, HB — Hands of Badiat abd Ala'i, ML — Mechanics League, RE — Red Eyes, SA — Society of Shifting Sands, SC — Sea's Children, SS — Spellslayers, SZ — Servants of the Zephyr, TF — Brotherhood of the True Flame, VZ — Viziers, YK — Yikaria (Yak-men)

Thus, the undisturbed desert environment remains a pristine source for magic. Only the presence of trade routes, an oasis, or desert tribes disturbs the stillness of the desert.

Each of the Shariats is listed in the sidebars in abbreviated BIRTHRIGHT format. Actual descriptions of each city-state or tribe and their regents are listed in the *Land of Fate* boxed set. Players and DMs should refer to that set for details.

The Grand Caliph

The Grand Caliph, Khalil al-Assad al-Zahir, holds court in Huzuz and is the greatest of all the rulers of Zakhara. He is the spiritual and temporal leader of the Land of Fate. Every other sovereign owes the Grand Caliph allegiance, at least in theory. In game terms, every regent contributes one GB each domain turn to the Grand Caliph and the Grand Caliph maintains at least one zero level law holding in every domain. For obvious reasons, players cannot start the game as the Grand Caliph and regent of Huzuz. It is up to the DM to decide whether players can ever hope to attain such status.

If a regent refuses to pay the one GB tribute to the Grand Caliph, the regent automatically suffers the effects of the Evil Eye, and the Hand of Fate turns against the regent and his domain. Only by first seizing control of the Grand Caliph's law holding in the domain and securing the support or control of all temple holdings can the regent of that domain avoid these penalties.

While the Grand Caliph is immensely powerful, he rarely flexes his muscles. Instead, the Grand Caliph gives lavish gifts to his friends and holds the most magnificent court in all Zakhara, offering hospitality to all who come before him. Should he be moved to anger, the Grand Caliph will manipulate the political situation first or contest holdings. Only as a last resort will he put an army in the field. Thus, he remains revered and respected, a figure above petty squabbles and disputes, courted by every regent.

The mamluks

The Mamluk slave-warriors are unique to Zakhara and rule Qudra, the City of Power. The Emir of Qudra rules in name only. The true powers of the city are the mamluks, who control the law holdings of the city. Only through courting the mamluks of the military council of Qudra is the city governed.

Beyond Qudra's walls, mamluk societies control law holdings in many city-states, functioning as independent armies. The law holdings of each mamluk society comprise a domain which can be controlled just like any other network of temple, guild, or source holdings. Players gain regency points and GB for administering such a network. Mamluk regents are militarily powerful. Each level of law holding is equivalent to one military unit. If a unit is destroyed, the law holding it came from is not reduced but cannot function as a military unit until three months or one domain turn has passed, allowing sufficient time to replace those mamluks lost. After that time, the holding is automatically capable of functioning as a military unit again.

The presence of the mamluk societies significantly weakens the noble rulers of Zakhara's city-states by decreasing their law holdings. Some mamluk societies are actually more powerful than many sultans or caliphs. However, most mamluk societies in a city willingly serve that city's ruler if asked and the ruler of a city is usually at least as powerful as any one mamluk group in the city and often more powerful. None the less, a regent must maintain good relations with the mamluk societies in his city or seek to expel them, a dangerous undertaking.

Holy slayers, mystic groups, and clerics

Tolerance is the unique feature of religion in Zakhara. Enlightened persons respect others who are Enlightened regardless of which mosque they attend. With the exception of the Pantheon League, the mosques do not attempt to expand their power like the temples of Cerilia. Even the Pantheon League operates on a political not a religious level, spreading theocracy rather than merely faith.

Instead, holy slayer organizations and the mystic groups seek to exercise control over temple holdings to spread their influence and particular beliefs. The temple holdings controlled by a holy slayer organization or a mystic group comprise a domain which can be controlled just like any other network of law, guild or source holdings. Players gain regency points and GB for administering such a network. Any temple holdings not controlled by a holy slayer organization or mystic group are assumed to be administered by the mosque itself under the protection of the regent. Such holdings function as if controlled by the local regent.

Merchant houses

Only a few merchant houses are described in any detail in the fund of Fate and *City of Delights* boxed sets. A few more are mentioned in the AL-QADIM sourceboxes. Presented here are six representative merchant houses based on those presented in the boxed sets and sourceboxes. These six houses are examples and you should create additional houses to suit your needs. The merchant houses control guild networks which are administered by PC or NPC regents using the same rules found in the BIRTHRIGHT boxed set. Any holdings not controlled by these six houses are left to be assigned by the DM or are controlled by local merchants.

The Al-Dalmari merchant family: Led by the charismatic corsair Makbulla bint Dalmar, the Al-Dalmari is one of the most wealthy merchant families. Specializing in direct trade between the Cities of the Pearl and the Cities of the Pantheon, the Al-Dalmari play a dangerous game. Not surprisingly, they are excellent diplomats as well as daring merchants.



The Al-Danafi merchant family:

Khwaja al-Danaf leads this socially prominent merchant family that strongly supports the Grand Caliph. Originally from Gana, the Al-Danafi is the leading merchant house in the Cities of the Heart, while still remaining powerful among the Pearl Cities. Transporting goods across the Golden Gulf is the chief business of this merchant family.

The Al-Ikhosarū merchant family:

Unlike many merchant families, the Al-Ikhosarū concentrate their guild holdings in a single area, the Cities of the Ancients. Yalister Ikhosarū, head of the family, has made the decision to avoid costly trade wars and concentrate on recovering relics of the Ruined Kingdoms, that can be profitably sold to middlemen. If the opportunity for expansion presents itself, the Al-Ikhosarū will be ready but until then they will continue to hire adventurers to pry their fortune from ruins.

The Al-Kamari merchant family: The head of the Al-Kamari is Mu'izzi al-Kamar but he runs the family's network of guild holdings in name only. He is controlled by the Yikaria. Through their guild holdings among the Cities of the North and the Cities of the Heart, the Al-Kamari truly seek to advance the interests of the Yikaria and not the family's profitable silk trade in Huzuz.

The Al-Misali merchant family:

Gogol al-Misal controls an extensive series of guild holding throughout the Cities of the Pantheon and the Cities of the Ancients. From headquarters in Hiyal and Huzuz, the Al-Misal family controls the largest network of slavers in the Land of Fate. Gogol is also a secret operative of the sorcerous Brotherhood of the True Flame, whose resources he can call on if needed.

The Al-Yodfah merchant family: This merchant family is among the newest. Led by Yodfah the Jeweler and headquartered in Muluk, this family concentrates on luxury items and exotics, particularly jewels. Taking opportunity where he can find it, Yodfah is the leading merchant in Qudra, where he has worked out a surprisingly good relationship with the mamluk societies that rule the city.

Sorcerous societies

As, described in the *Complete Sha'ir's Handbook*, wizards are better organized in Zakhara than in many other settings, banding together into sorcerous societies. These societies serve as informa-

tion exchanges but also provide protection for wizards against magical rivals. Feuds among wizards, particularly those of opposed elemental schools, are common and the Brotherhood of the True Flame seeks nothing less than the destruction of all forms of magic not based on fire. Wizards need friends as well as resources.

In Zakhara, sorcerous societies control the source holdings essential to casting realm magic. These societies comprise domains which can be controlled just like any other network of holdings and players gain regency points and GB for administering such a network. Sorcerous societies also have almost exclusive knowledge of realm spells, in part because they monopolize the source holdings necessary to cast realm magic and in part because they jealously guard their knowledge. While sufficiently powerful wizards, such as the White Agate, might individually control magical sources and be knowledgeable enough to cast realm magic, they are the exception to the rule and must be prepared to deal with constant attempts by Sorcerous Societies to wrest their source holdings from them.

Secrecy is the hallmark of the sorcerous societies. Rarely will a wizard make himself known as such, preferring to remain evasive on the topic. This secrecy insures that powerful magical knowledge remains the province of the sorcerous societies and helps guard against rival wizards. In their magical feuds, the sorcerous societies carefully plan each move they make. Rivalries arise over differing magical philosophy but feuds usually involve the control of the knowledge of realm magic or source holdings. These wizardly wars are always clandestine affairs and very often fought through manipulation of third parties. The sorcerous societies generally seek political power only to protect their magical power, though sultans and caliphs regularly seek out magical advice or assistance for their own ends. This relationship works out well for all parties, even if they occasionally work at cross purposes.

The Yikaria

Far to the north in the World Pillar Mountains the Yikaria, or yak-men, plot the conquest and enslavement of the Enlightened lands of Zakhara. With their formidable ability to possess the bodies of their victims, the threat the Yikaria poses should not be underestimated.

One can never be certain one is not dealing with one of their agents.

With the rise of blood powers among the Sharit, the yak-men have been quick to see opportunity and seize it. Experiments on blooded scions captured or possessed has revealed that blood powers can be stolen and transferred to yak-men. Though still rare, blooded Yikaria are being more frequently encountered. All of those encountered have been possessed of the blood of Aasir. It is speculated that blood theft by the Yikaria invariably results in the taint of Aasir's evil, but this has not been conclusively proven.

Unlike other groups in Zakhara, which control networks of holdings, the Yikaria can only control holdings through their possessed victims. Thus, Yikarian domains include law, temple, guild, and source holdings in a unified network. Only in the World Pillar Mountains is it speculated that the Yikaria control more standard networks of holdings, but information is scarce and notoriously unreliable. Yikarian control over the holdings of the Land of Fate is still primarily confined to the areas north of Suq Bay, but the threat is growing. Already, the Yikaria control the Al-Kamari merchant family.

Genies

Genies often hold positions of authority but they do not commonly control any particular type of holding.

Genies are able to recognize blooded characters automatically, as if that character carried a Bloodmark, if the character meets the genie's gaze. Veils, masks or other eye coverings prevent this identification. Genies respond to such characters cautiously. They know the power blooded scions possess and they are always on guard. Genies can never be blooded.

It is within a genie's power to grant a temporary 1-2 point increase to any source holding by tapping their elemental plane. After any realm spell is cast, the source rating returns to normal. Genies always drive a hard bargain before utilizing this power to help, any but their favorites. While there is no limit to the number of times a genie can increase a source holding, any genie doing so more than once a month attracts the attention of the genie ruler of his elemental plane and is forced to answer for his actions. Multiple increases are never cumulative.

Scions of the desert

Because Zakhara is so intensely urban, holdings cluster around the city states and are more divided among any number of power groups than is the case in Cerilia. This makes cooperation among PCs and power groups much more critical if sufficient money and resources are to be raised against a threat. Politicking and building coalitions are much more important in the Land of Fate. While one way around this is for a regent to merely seize control of all types of holdings within his domain or aggressively seek to expand his domain, this quickly draws the wrath of other regents, even those unaffected by the power grab, because such actions are an affront to the Grand Caliph's power. It is far better for a regent to make vassals of the contested holdings, using the BIRTHRIGHT rules for vassalage. This strategy insures the regent's increased income and power but also makes him appear generous in victory, increasing his prestige and avoiding having coalitions form against him.

Successfully ruling and expanding a domain in the Land of Fate is not a simple matter and calls on different skills than those needed in Cerilia. The conditions you encounter in Zakhara demand no less. Whether you chose to play a mamluk, holy slayer, wealthy merchant, a member of one of the sorcerous societies, or the ruler of one of the many cities or tribes of Zakhara, the Land of Fate holds rewards and challenges for blooded characters like those found nowhere else. The mystery, intrigue and magic of the Arabian Nights is yours to experience and to command. Using the BIRTHRIGHT system of domain rulership in the AL-QADIM setting, you can create exotic adventures that combine the best of both settings and allow your characters to chart a path from humble beginnings to the very pinnacle of success. May Fate smile upon your endeavors!



Jim Parks is a freelance writer who has worked with White Wolf Games Studio, Steve Jackson Games, Shadis Magazine and R. Talsorian Games. This is Jim's first article for DRAGON® Magazine. Jim is married to Lisa, to whom this article, and everything he does, is dedicated.

TURN THE PAGE FOR THE FINALE OF “THE BARGAIN”

CREDITS

STORY

JEFF GRUBB

ART

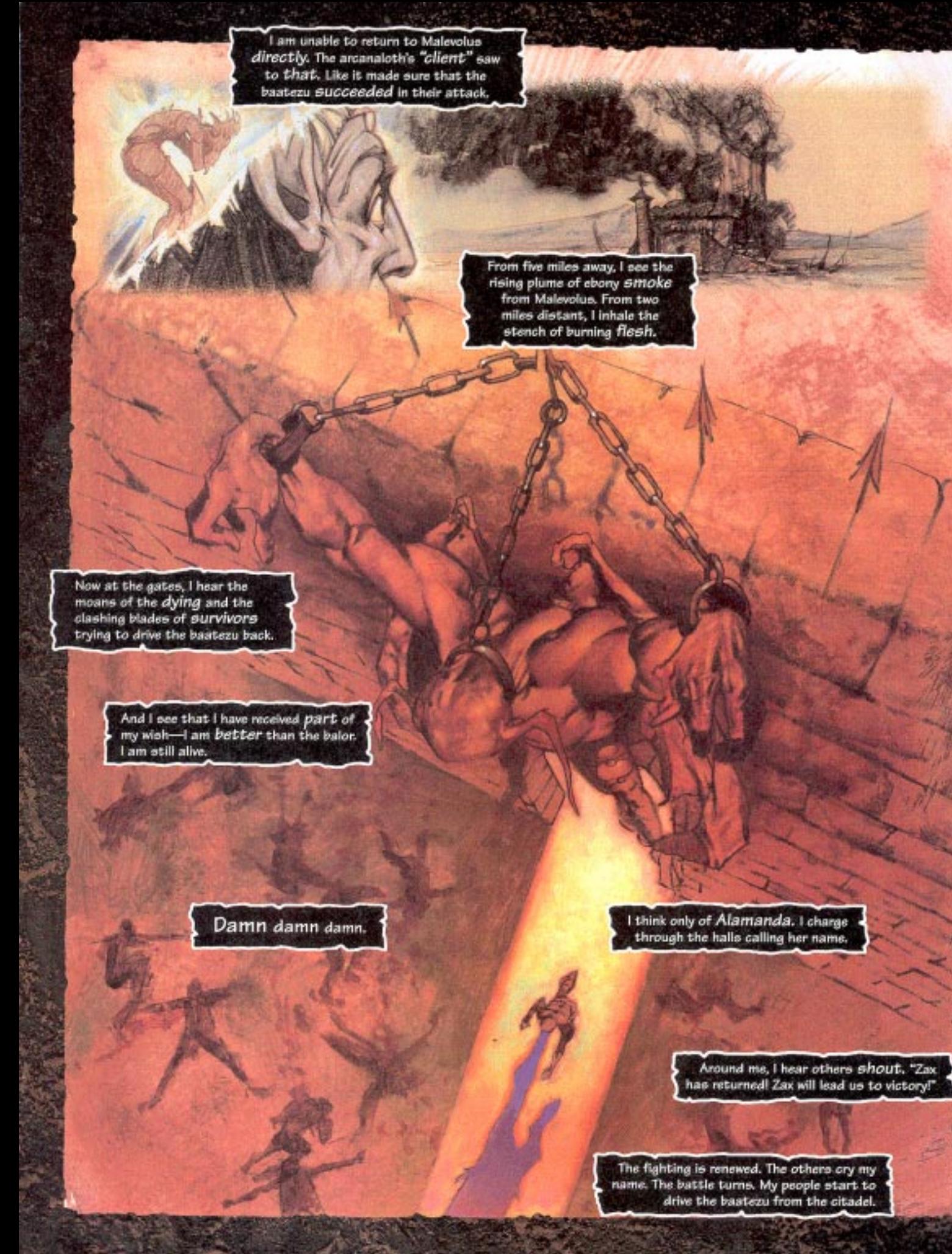
ROB RUPPEL

&

TONY DIERLIZZI

COMPUTER GRAPHICS & DESIGN

DAWN MURIN



I am unable to return to Malevolus directly. The arcanoloth's "client" saw to that. Like it made sure that the baatezu succeeded in their attack.

From five miles away, I see the rising plume of ebony smoke from Malevolus. From two miles distant, I inhale the stench of burning flesh.

Now at the gates, I hear the moans of the dying and the clashing blades of survivors trying to drive the baatezu back.

And I see that I have received part of my wish—I am better than the bajor. I am still alive.

Damn damn damn.

I think only of Alamanda. I charge through the halls calling her name.

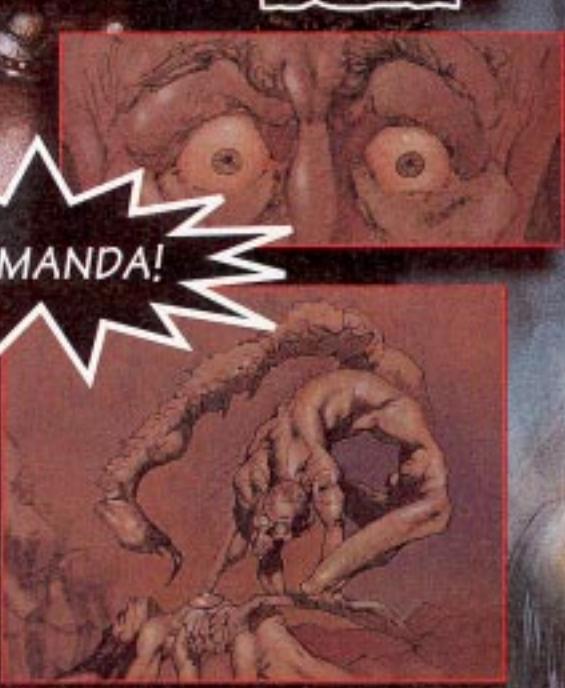
Around me, I hear others shout. "Zax has returned! Zax will lead us to victory!"

The fighting is renewed. The others cry my name. The battle turns. My people start to drive the baatezu from the citadel.



I ignore them. I must find Alamanda. Where was she when the walls were breached? Where was she when the bairor died?

Where was —



ALAMANDA!

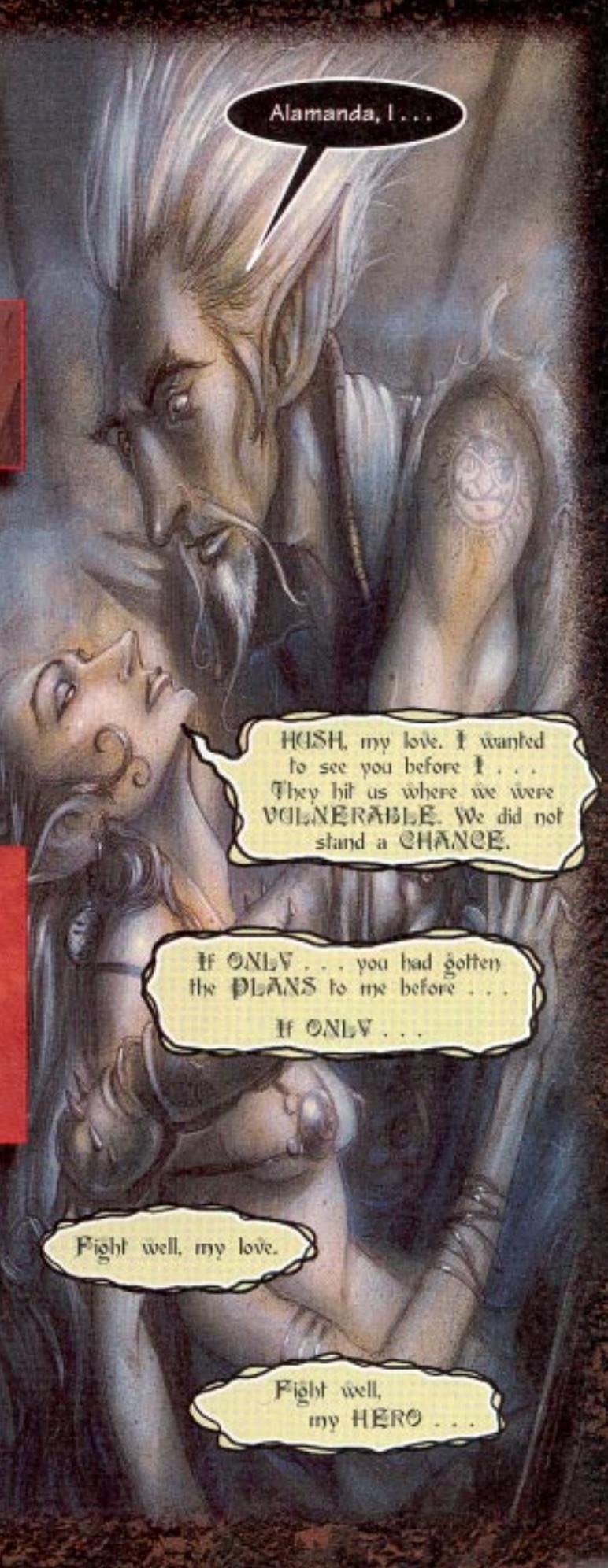


I lash out without thinking.



I hear others shouting my name.

They are calling me a hero.
The bairor of Malevolus.



Alamanda, I . . .

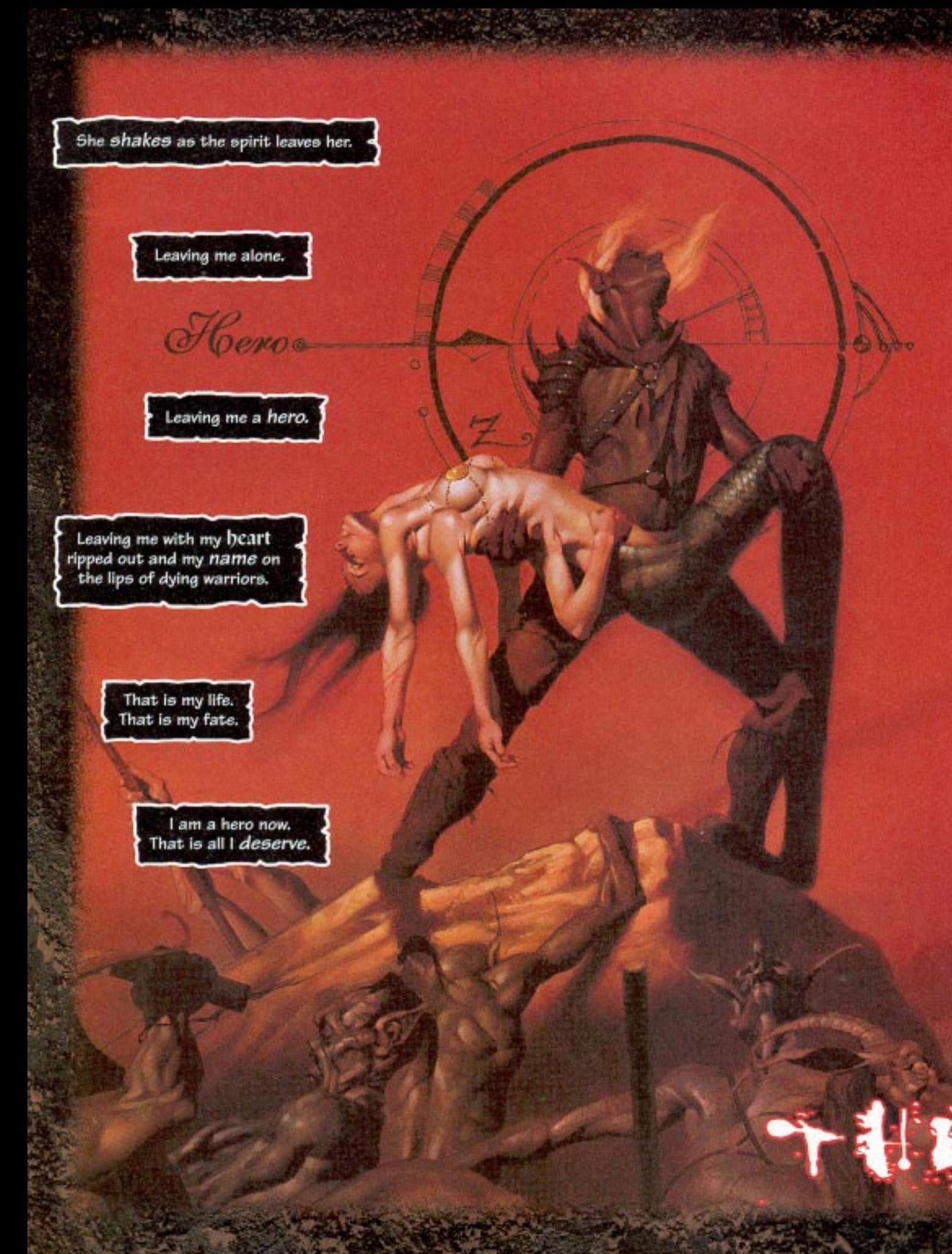
HUSH, my love. I wanted to see you before I . . .
They hit us where we were VULNERABLE. We did not stand a CHANCE.

IF ONLY . . . you had gotten the PLANS to me before . . .

IF ONLY . . .

Fight well, my love.

Fight well,
my HERO . . .



She shakes as the spirit leaves her.

Leaving me alone.

Hero

Leaving me a hero.

Leaving me with my heart
ripped out and my name on
the lips of dying warriors.

That is my life.
That is my fate.

I am a hero now.
That is all I deserve.

THE

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by Dori Hein

In recent issues of *DRAGON® Magazine*, we have covered the strategies, special abilities, and unique features of races new to the world of Esfah. But with the excitement generated by the release of the Amazons, Firewalkers, Undead, and Feral, the first four races have been seemingly forgotten in these discussions of the **DRAGON DICE™** game.

Are we suggesting that their glory days are over? No!

Are viable armies composed of Coral Elves, Dwarves, Goblins, and Lava Elves things of the past? *Of course not!*

Most **DRAGON DICE** players are intimately familiar with the four basic races, so I won't do an overview of them. Instead, I'll just detail a few strategies you can use to run roughshod over your enemies.

Coral Elf armies

Coral Elves — a staple, utilitarian race — seem to dot the landscape in virtually every **DRAGON DICE** game. The reason why is clear: Selumari are made of air and water elements, which lets them cast some of the most powerful spells in the game. As magicians, Coral Elves have it all: damage spells (*hailstorm*, *lightning strike*); protective spells (*watery double*, *wall of ice*); maneuver-



ability magic (*wind walk*); healing magic (*breath of life*); penalizing magic (*wall of fog*); and even a spell that can reduce a terrain die, preventing an opponent from winning (*flashflood*). This last spell is equally useful for Coral Elves to maneuver a terrain to an action of their choice, such as magic or missile.

The Selumari have only one disadvantage as magicians: Their native coastland terrain has few magic faces (available only on face 1 or 8), hence the difficulty. For this reason, a player may want to put a swampland on the table as it doubles green magic and has magic on faces 1, 2, and 8 (or the swampland temple, which has magic on faces 1, 2, 3, and 8). The Coral Elves' home terrain is more suited to fighting a missile war, and Selumari archers backed with a sufficient number of magicians make a deadly force.

If you look at one complete set of Coral Elf units, you'll find that they have 59 melee results spread fairly evenly over their sides (not counting ID icons). When compared to magic results (23) and missile icons (37), you can see that Coral Elves really are built for both melee and missile combat. They also have a large number of maneuver icons (39). What they are sadly lacking in is saves. When away from their home terrain (where their maneuvers count as saves), Coral Elves have only 15 saves.

So what do all these numbers mean when putting together an army of Coral Elves?

Mix your troop rarity. Coral Elves are equally balanced between common, uncommon, and rare dice; that is, each has its uses. Coral Elves have the advantage of resurrection magic (*breath of life*), so lost uncommons and rares can be restored.

Stay on the coast. Unless you've created and tuned an army that can survive in other terrains, stay in the coastland. You can't save anywhere else. Venture away from the coast only if you have an army of magicians using green magic to provide you with some much needed saves. None of the other races are any good in the coastland, so their lives will be miserable if you force them to come to you. The same is true if you can involve them in either a magic or missile brawl.

Everyone hates *lightning strike*. Show your opponent why. Use it to decimate opposing magicians. Magic is much more powerful when you're the only one using it. Do the same with your Coral Elf sharpshooters and their bulls-eye icons.

Dragon summoning for fun and profit. Summon as many green dragons as you can and hope for a breath result. Green dragon breath halves all rolls made by the target army or any units in that army — rounding down. Follow a green dragon breath attack with a big *hailstorm*, or a major melee or missile attack. You may even want to arrange for a charge. No matter what, it's sure to be a lethal experience for your opponent.

Dwarf armies

The Vagha are made of red and gold elements, allowing them to use both fire and earth magic. Access to these spells allows the Dwarves to cast some highly useful magic — spells that supplement their great melee abilities. Dwarf magicians can cast melee enhancement magic (*burning hands*); protective magic (*stoneskin*); maneuver magic (*transmute rock to mud*); healing magic (*spark of life*); penalizing spells (*ash storm*, *dancing lights*); and even a spell that can bury opponents' dead units, removing them from the game forever (*dust to dust*). But the most important spell in the Dwarves' arsenal is *path*, an earth spell that allows units to jump from one terrain to another (without going to reserve first).

The Vagha's home terrain is the highlands, which is a distinct advantage for the Dwarves. This race is strong in melee, and the highland terrain puts them into melee on faces 6, 7, and 8. Since the Dwarves' red and gold magic results are both doubled in the highlands, magic is extremely important to them, and magic appears on a highland die on faces 1, 2, and 3. Only on face 4 or 5 is a Dwarf army at a disadvantage, and then only for a short time since they can quickly maneuver out of missile range.

If you look at a complete set of Dwarf units, you'd find that they have 77 melee results spread fairly evenly over their sides (not counting ID icons). When compared to magic results (23) and missile icons (24), you can see why Dwarves are the melee kings of DRAGON DICE. Dwarves are also reasonably maneuverable (27), and they save extremely well (29 saves).

When putting together an army of Dwarves, keep the following in mind:

Mix your troop rarity. Like Coral Elves, Dwarves are well balanced, each with its own uses. Dwarves also have resurrection magic (*spark of life*), so lost uncommons and rares can be restored.

Go where the action is. Dwarves save well, deal plenty of damage, and have decent spells. So why aren't you out there making your opponent hate you? For some reason, Dwarves don't seem as popular a race as Coral Elves, and that seems odd. Dust off those red-and-gold beauties and take the fight to your opponent. If he's playing Coral or Lava Elves, he wants to sit back and kill you with spells from a distance. Don't let



him. Push his forces, make them fight. Go into enemy territory and turn the terrain to melee. Laugh at the losses you take; they'll be less than his if you can only get to melee. Keep a group of magicians in reserve or protected at your home terrain to cast protective spells, *transmute rock to mud*, and *spark of life*.

Path to victory. Many, many games have been won when someone is wiped out an eighth face, only to have the dwarves suddenly appear, grab the terrain, and announce that they've won the game. Make it happen for you by watching for your opportunity and remembering that you (and those pesky Goblins) have the only spell that allows instant transport between terrains.

Ash doesn't hurt dragons. A nasty thing to do to your opponents is to cover a terrain with as many *ash storms* as possible. Then, while they're trying to find their swords in the smog, drop a dragon or two on them. The dragon isn't slowed down by the *ash storm* at all. This is not the case for your opponents, who must suffer through the attack, laboring under substantial penalties.

Goblin armies

The Trogs are made of black and gold elements, allowing them to use both death and earth magic. Access to death spells gives the Goblins some highly useful magic, spells that supplement their great melee and missile abilities. But that ability also limits them — they are the only basic race that cannot restore uncommon and rare units to life.

Goblin magicians can cast protective magic (*stoneskin*); maneuver magic (*transmute rock to mud*); healing magic (*reanimate dead*); penalizing magic (*palsy*); instant-kill magic (*finger of death*); and even a spell that sends dead units to reserves instead of removing them from play (*open grave*). They, like the Dwarves, have the ability to cast *path*, which allows them to jump quickly from terrain to terrain.

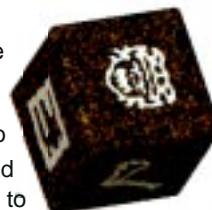
The Goblins's home terrain is the swamplands. Trogs, like Dwarves, are good at melee combat, and swampland terrain puts them into melee on faces 5, 6, 7, and 8. Goblins have the advantage of doubled maneuvers in swampland, making their maneuver rolls extremely high there. Goblins are a good all-around

race, especially considering that they have no significant disadvantages in any terrain.

If you look at one complete set of Goblin units, you'll find that they have 59 melee results spread across their sides (not counting ID icons). When compared to magic results (23) and missile icons (25) you can see why Goblins are considered all-around units. Goblins are also surprisingly quick, having 40 maneuver results. They have a total of 33 saves, making them the most damage-resistant race out there.

So what's the charm in putting together an all-Goblin army?

Unless you have trolls, use common Goblins. It's depressing not to use the more exciting uncommon and rare units, but unless you have some way of restoring them to life, you should stick to common troops. With a common Goblin horde, you'll be assured of getting some of anything you roll for. You won't get to use the snazzy special action icons, but who needs them when you're winning with overwhelming numbers? If you're lucky enough to have plenty of trolls and they roll the regenerate icon, you can resurrect those uncommon and rare units (up to four health per regenerate).



Go where the action is. Goblins save better than any race in the game. Your troops are well balanced for melee, missile, and magic combat. So why not take the fight to your opponents? Other than losing your double maneuvers in swampland, you're not suffering much. Like the Dwarves, Goblins should go into their enemies' homelands and drag them into the war. Don't allow your opponents the luxury of sitting back and casting damage spells at their leisure. The moment you stop pushing is the moment you've lost the game.

Path to victory. Use *path* spells to drop your troops into weakly defended terrains. The Goblins' motto should be, "Kick 'em when they're down, then kick 'em again to make sure they stay down."

Give 'em the finger. The *finger of death*, that is. Add insult to injury by first burying an opponent's dead units to double your black magic, then use the points to kill one of their favorite units, with no save. Do this as often as possible and you'll be the most "popular" player in the game.



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Lava elf armies

The Morehl are made of red and black elements, allowing them to cast both fire and death spells. Access to these types of magic make the Lava Elves arguably the most powerful spellcasting race in the game. Lava Elf magicians can cast spells to improve their battle prowess (*burning hands*); protective magic (*open grave*); healing spells (*spark of life, reanimate dead*); penalizing spells (*ash storm, dancing lights, palsy*); and that spell guaranteed to make an enemy, *finger of death*.

Like the Dwarves, the Morehl's home terrain is the highlands. Lava Elves are good at magic, and highland terrain puts them in magic on faces 1, 2, 3, and 8. Since red magic ID results are doubled in the highlands (black can be doubled anywhere), it's important for the race to stay in the highlands. Lava Elves are competent with melee and missile weapons as well.

Take a look at a complete set of Lava Elf units, and you'll notice something right off the bat. Unlike the other races, Lava Elf results aren't balanced. They can have five results on one side and only one result on another — all on the same die. Lava Elves can be feast or famine. Your rolls should average out, but occasionally you can get into great winning (or losing) streaks with the Lava Elves.

Morehl have 62 melee results (not counting ID icons), making them second only to Dwarves in melee. When compared to magic results (23) and missile icons (37), you can see why Lava Elves are many players' favorite DRAGON DICE race. Lava Elves have a total of 18 saves spread over the various units, putting them just ahead of Coral Elves. Lastly, these elves are also maneuverable (35), which is important since their maneuvers count as saves in the highlands.

When putting together an army of Morehl, take into account the following:

Mix your troop rarity. Since Lava Elves are balanced between common, uncommon, and rare units, you can have all types in your army. Lava Elves can cast *spark of life* and *reanimate dead*, so any lost uncommons and rares can be restored.

Stay in the hills. Unless you've created and tuned an army that can survive in other terrains, stay in the highlands. You can't save anywhere else. Your elves don't have any protective spells, which



could help them weather the storms of combat at other terrains, so you really have to stay put if at all possible. Rely on your heavy and light melee units to protect you if the enemy takes the fight to your home terrain.

If things look bad, shut things down. You can drop so many *ash storms* on a terrain that melee, missile, and magic actions basically come to a standstill. If things start to happen that you don't like, shut them down. This tactic can also work if someone is in your home terrain and is pressing you. Assuming that there's no one in a tower or at the frontier to attack you with missiles, cast *ash storms* on your own terrain. The spells will keep the damage down, and they'll wear off at the start of your turn — allowing you to cast other spells before throwing *ash storms* again. Keep this strategy up long enough and your attacker will get bored and go home.

Ash doesn't hurt dragons. Just as with the Dwarves, the Lava Elves can pull a vicious maneuver by littering a terrain with *ash storms* and then sending in dragons.

Beginners, take heart

Are you new to the DRAGON DICE game, or maybe intimidated a bit by all the strategies discussed thus far? If so, take heart: TSR has produced a two-player board-game version of the original DRAGON DICE game. Designed specifically for new players, the BATTLE BOX™ game introduces the most basic elements of DRAGON DICE. The product contains two sets of dice (identical in breakdown and collation to those in the DRAGON DICE basic sets), one for each player; a game board; two reference cards, one for each player; BATTLE Box rules (filled with photographs detailing play); and the DRAGON DICE Revised Rules for when players are ready to graduate to the full game.



Dori Hein is the Creative Director for the DRAGON DICE product line. Her current project is co-designing the Dice Commander's Manual, a reference guide to DRAGON DICE. She welcomes input on unusual strategies or other ideas you'd like to see included in the guide. Address correspondence to Dori at TSR, or send e-mail to tsrdori@aol.com.



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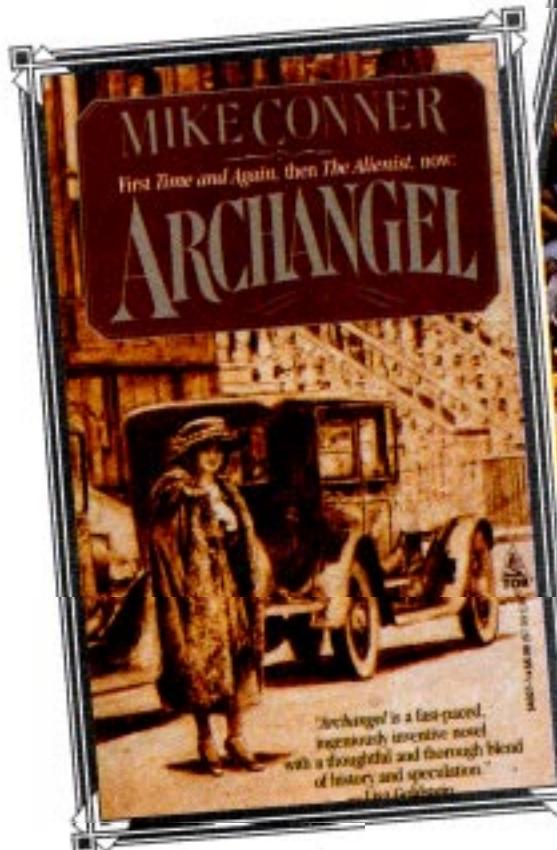
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The DRAGON® Magazine staff are, as one might expect, avid readers of fantasy and science fiction. Every now and then we'll come across a book we think you'll enjoy. When that happens, we'll recommend it here. If you try one of these on our advice, drop us a line to tell us your opinion. Write to "Bookwyrm's," DRAGON Magazine, 201 Sheridan Springs Road, Lake Geneva, WI 53147 or send e-mail to tsrdragon@aol.com.

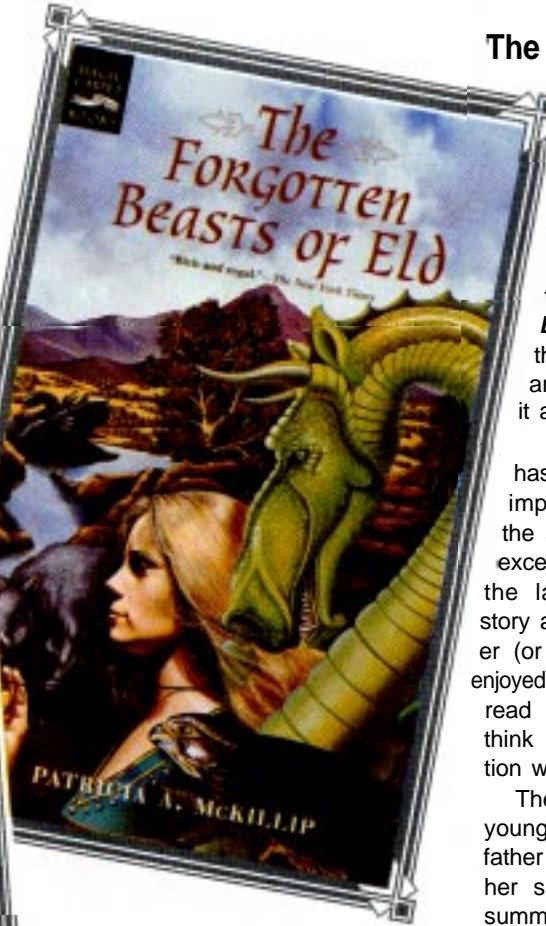


Archangel

Mike Conner

Tor \$6.99

In *Archangel*, Mike Conner creates an alternate Earth where World War I comes to a different end. A deadly virus known as the Hun strikes the battlefields of Europe with incredible ferocity. The Hun,



a variant of the ebola virus, may have sprung from the same laboratories that produced mustard gas and other air-borne horrors used in the first World War. The soldiers who survived return home, bringing the Hun with them.

Archangel is set in a small Minnesota town in the 1930s. Despair is a constant. Epidemics of the disease come and go. The population dwindles, but the Hun is selective. Those of African descent are immune, and they seem poised to inherit the world.

Add to this a blood stealer, a young news photographer turned detective, and a mysterious woman known only

as the Archangel, and you get an excellent novel of suspense.

However, this is not just a thriller. The novel deals with race and gender prejudice, greed, and power. Perhaps the strongest element of the story is the hope and faith with which the characters face fear.

Conner's book grabs hold of you and doesn't let go until the very end. The period research is right on, and the characters are real.

P.W.

The Forgotten Beasts of Eld

Patricia A. McKillip

Magic Carpet Books \$6.00

For a while I read very nearly a book a day, devouring every modern work of fantasy that I could find. Still, I'm always finding great books that eluded me in my teens. After reading *The Forgotten Beasts of Eld*, I was at once sorry that I had missed it the first time around and glad that I'd discovered it as an adult.

Patricia A. McKillip's first full novel has been reprinted under a children's imprint, but that's misleading. While the simple prose and fairy-tale plot are excellent for children, the elegance of the language and the rich, resonant story appeal even more to an adult reader (or a canny child). I'm sure I'd have enjoyed *The Forgotten Beasts of Eld* had I read it when I was twelve, but I don't think its sparse beauty and wise resolution would have moved me as it did.

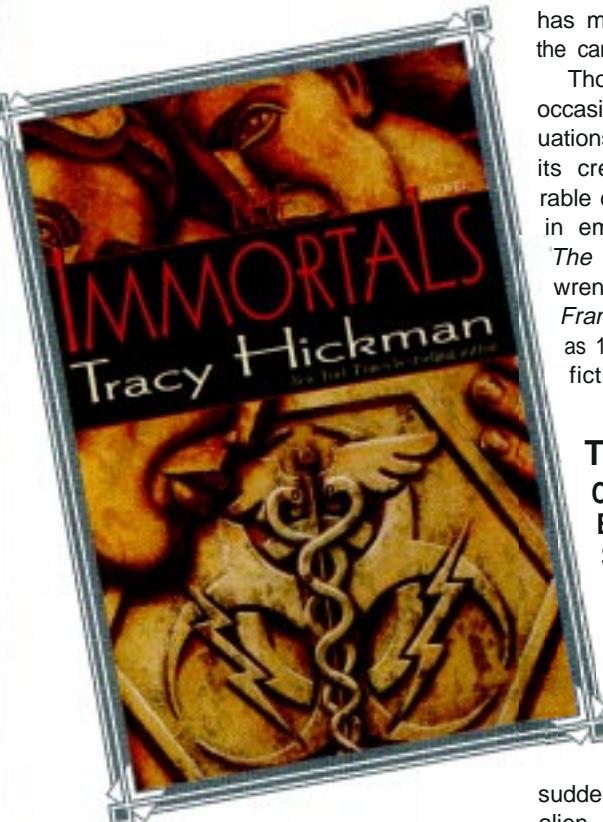
The protagonist of the tale is Sybel, a young woman who has learned from her father how to call fantastic creatures to her side. None can resist her magical summons, not the Black Swan of Tirlith, nor the white boar Cynn, nor even the green-winged dragon Gyld. Each of these and the other magnificent animals has a legendary history so convincing that you may find yourself searching for their sources in mythology. Sybel and the animals live in idyllic seclusion, safe from the war between the King of Mondor and the Sirel Lords. That is until a soldier arrives to ask Sybel to raise the child of King Drede. As the infant grows to boyhood and the warring factions want him back, Sybel learns that she can no longer live apart from the world.

The conflicts Sybel must face throughout the story range from overcoming her fear of the outside world to resisting the powerful summons of an enemy wizard. The greatest challenge she must face,

however, is one of understanding her desires and defining her morality. The result is a tale as human and true as it is lovely and engaging. I haven't enjoyed and admired a book so much in many years.

While contemporary fantasy has many fine titles, truly magical stories sometimes seem as rare as firebreathing dragons or talking boars. If you wish you could find another book as timeless and enchanting as *The Fellowship of the Ring* or *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, find a copy of *The Forgotten Beasts of Eld*. Read it for yourself. Then, if they have been especially good, read it to your children.

D.G.



The Immortals

Tracy Hickman

Roc

\$19.95

Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, since it deals with contemporary issues in a conceivable near future, is often used in high school and college classes as a token science-fiction novel. The fact that it lacks any real credibility in terms of characterization, plot, or even its basic premise does not seem to bother the so-called educators who choose the texts for these classes. They would be much better served by teaching *The Immortals* by Tracy Hickman. It

also deals with the near future and contemporary issues, but with a few major differences: it's credible, balanced, and genderly indifferent (as opposed to the militant feminist slant of Atwood's work).

The Immortals deals with the arrival of V-CIDS, a lethal descendant of the AIDS virus that is highly contagious, more lethal, and more indiscriminate than its ancestor. With the cold efficiency of the Third Reich, the government declares martial law and installs a system to confine the disease by the massive quarantine of the sick in isolated internment camps. The truth behind the government's containment program is discovered by a media executive who has managed to gain access to one of the camps in search of his estranged son.

Though the novel has its fair share of occasionally cliched and convenient situations, *The Immortals* is horrifying in its credibility and filled with memorable characters whose fates hold you in emotional thrall. As exciting as *The Great Escape*, as emotionally wrenching as *The Diary of Anne Frank*, and as thought provoking as 1984, *The Immortals* is science fiction at its most meaningful.

B.T.

The Wind After Time

Chris Bunch
Ballantine

\$5.99

Chris Bunch is probably best known as the coauthor of the Sten adventures. With *The Wind After Time*, he begins a new series called Shadow Warrior.

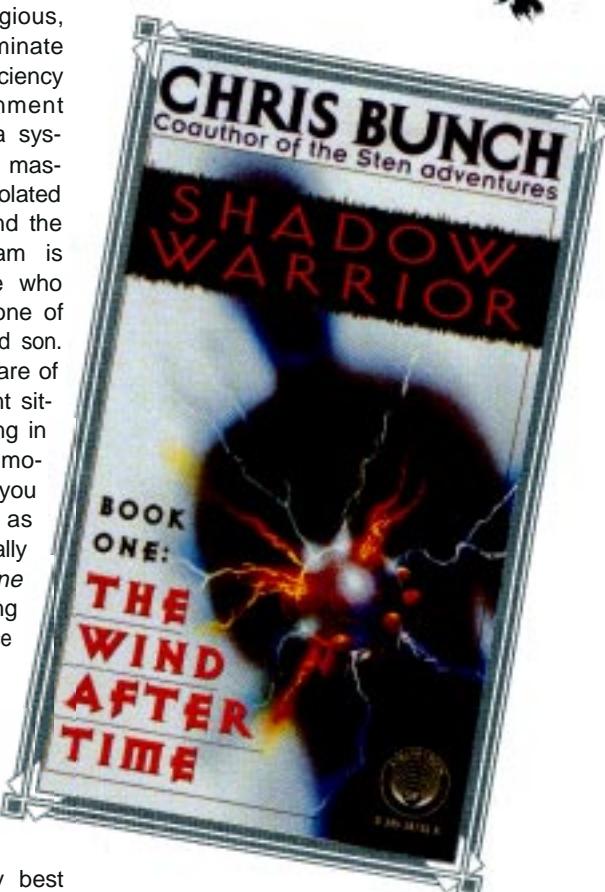
As the novel opens, we learn that a devastating war in space suddenly ended when the enemy, an alien race known as the Al'ar, simply vanished. Joshua Wolfe spent years with the mysterious Al'ar, first as a guest, then as a prisoner of war, learning many of their ways. Now, rumor has it, one Al'ar has reappeared, and Joshua is charged with finding it.

This adventure novel has many things to recommend it. The action is fast-paced and frequent. Although the weaponry sometimes verges on the cartoonish, it does not detract from the story. Joshua practices a mysterious martial art learned from the Al'ar. While this fighting style is not detailed, enough is revealed to make it intriguing. Wolfe's ship, the Grayle, is also a curiosity. Judging by Bunch's previous Sten books, we will

learn more as the series progresses.

This is not great science fiction, but it works well as adventure. If you enjoy a good space opera, Bunch offers enough in this first book to lead the reader on to the next. Here's hoping this series develops as Sten did.

P.W.



By Michael Ferman



"Hey, fellas!"



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Tales of the Fifth Age



Thunder and Ice

by
Douglas Niles

Artwork by Terry Dykstra

14 \$C

The coming of the Great Dragons to the Plains of Dust changed not only the land but also its people. And so arose a most unusual union in the realm of Duntollik, born of ice and thunder.

— From the *Chronicles of Nathal*, compiled in 31 \$C.

Warred heard a faint rumble, the sound startling and uncanny from the cloudless sky. The first distant pulse was a slight disturbance in the air, gone before the barbarian could begin to listen. For long seconds he remained silent, scalp prickling with unease. Heartbeats passed, and he was about to dismiss his first alarm as imaginary — but then he heard another boom. This one resonated faintly through the ground beneath his moccasins.

"Did you hear me? I told you I was cold," Shayne said pointedly, nudging him in the ribs with a sharp elbow. The plainswoman leaned close, reminding him of the unusual chill in the spring breeze. Her eyes flashed invitingly as she reminded, "And you said you could warm me up."

Instead Warred continued to stare to the south, across the tumbling vastness that was the Plains of Dust.

"Did you hear that?", he asked, still straining for a repeat of that distant noise.

"What?" she asked crossly. For a moment Shayne frowned, as if ready to stalk back to the village on her own. But then, apparently sensing Warred's apprehension, she turned her attention to the distant sky.

Another long interval passed until the thunder pulsed once more — a rolling, barely audible whump.

"There aren't any clouds." The horsetail of her long black hair swirled as the plainswoman tilted her head to look north, then east and west. "Not anywhere."

Together they listened. When the next pulse came, it was so faint that Warred felt ashamed of his jittery reaction.

"It's got to be fifty miles away. We've got some time before the storm gets here," he said, his hand finding Shayne's. A trace of wind whipped the fringes of her leather kilt, momentarily outlining her lithe form.

Belatedly Warred's thoughts returned to the reason he had invited Shayne to walk with him to the Lookout, this massive pile of boulders and gravel that rose from the rolling plains several miles from the village of their Sandhill tribe. The natural rockpile was the only source of good stones for many miles across the grassy hills and dry, sandy swales of the Plains of Dust — not that the plainsmen had any great use for stones.

As for Shayne, he was still rather surprised that she had consented to walk anywhere with him at all. Though Warred could cast a spear with reasonable accuracy, and run as fast and as far as any Sandhill warrior, there were several young men in the tribe with considerably more swagger, strength, and size than the young spearman.

One valiant brave, named Indigo for the deep color of his eyes, had shown a great deal of interest in Shayne. He had glowered angrily when she had strolled off with Warred, whose skinny frame and eternally-squinting visage gave little suggestion of barbarian masculinity.

Another pulse of thunder resonated, slightly louder now, but Warred paid little attention, instead turning to take both of Shayne's hands.

"When you said you could warm me, I don't suppose you intended to build a fire," she teased, her gaze bold and inviting. "After all, there's no wood around here."

"That's just it!" he exclaimed in a rush of enthusiasm.

"I wanted you to be the first to see it. Here — help me gather some of these rocks."

"You're going to burn them?" Shayne demanded in exasperation.

Warred had blundered too far to turn back. "Not burn them, exactly... kind of transform them into heat. I discovered how last year, accidentally, when I was building a trail cairn."

"You mean magic? Warred Stareye, you know that there hasn't been a spell cast on the Plains of Dust since the Second Cataclysm! If you made me walk all the way out here just to —"

"That's not it!" he protested. "I mean, I know that the old kinds of magic disappeared with the gods and the three moons. But this is new. It's like I reach down into the ground, pull the power right out of Krynn."

"And you haven't told anyone else?" Shayne seemed surprised.

"No!"

"How does it work?" If the plainswoman was amused, she concealed the reaction very well. Indeed, she seemed honestly curious.

"I'm, well, I'm not exactly sure. I make a cairn, and touch all the stones, try to get a feel for them. When I built the pile that first time, of course, I was just trying to set them firmly — but when I touched them I felt something else, something deeper. The stones seem to serve as coals, giving the power focus. And maybe the air going between them helps, like a bellows fanning a real fire. As for the heat..." He tried to explain, knowing his words weren't adequate. "It's just down there somewhere, under our feet. When I touch the stones just right, I sort of coax the warmth upward. Then the stones start to glow, and it's as hot as a real fire."

"Why don't you show me?" Shayne suggested.

Warred quickly knelt and gathered several dozen fist-sized stones, enough to form a pyramidal mound before him. Now that he was starting, he felt completely unready, embarrassed that his trembling hands betrayed his sudden nervousness. Drawing a deep breath, the plainsman closed his eyes and lightly touched the stones. He flicked his hands across the small cairn, allowing his fingertips to brush each rock as he tried to sense the inner patterns, the striations and hollows that marked each piece.

This had been a natural, even instinctive function before, but now he couldn't sense anything beyond the rough lichens outlining many of the stones. Perhaps Shayne made him nervous, or he might have been distracted by his earlier unease. In any event, the rocks remained dull and lifeless.

Another thud resonated in the distance. Though his eyes were still closed, Warred was acutely conscious of the plainswoman's presence. His heart pounded and blood pulsed in his temples as his hands moved faster, trying to find the elusive fire.

But the stones were cold, as dead as any other inanimate objects. He sighed, and then thought of a new fear: had he told her his greatest secret, only to make an utter fool of himself?

"Warred?"

He raised his eyes, looking at Shayne for a hint of mockery or contempt. Instead, she frowned with genuine concern.

"I believe what you've told me," she said gently. "But perhaps this isn't the right day."

With a muttered grunt of frustration he slumped back, reluctantly acknowledging that she was right. Before he could reply, another wave of dull sound crumpled through the air, significantly louder than before.

"That's the strangest thunder I've ever heard," Shayne continued. "Almost like a godly drum, instead of a storm."

Warred felt the resonance fade while his apprehension returned with growing force. His little feat of warming stones began to seem like a frivolous waste of time against the menace that he sensed through the air and ground. Shayne shivered again, and this time he knew that it wasn't because of the chill.

"We'd better get back to the village," he said tightly.

"Yes!" the plainswoman agreed.

And then they were both running, as only the plains barbarians could run. The dry grass crunched beneath their moccasins, long strides devouring the undulating terrain. The pair raced up a ridge and down the descending slope like gulls soaring above the waters of the surging sea. The wind of their speed pulled Shayne's horsetail into a streaming plume and scattered Warred's unbound locks — nearly as long as the woman's — into a floating fan of dark strands.

The thunder pounded a cadence to their flight, and the plainsman realized that Shayne's comparison to a drumbeat was apt: the sound was repeated on a very regular basis, about once every ten or twelve steps. The two plainsfolk didn't speak, but Warred saw from the pallor of Shayne's features that she was frightened, even terrified. He tried to master his own fear, to be a rock of strength for her sake, but he couldn't hide the terror that drove his own steps with grim urgency.

Finally they crested the ridge above the rounded valley where the Sandhill tribe had encamped for the dry season. The waterhole was a circle of brackish liquid far below, surrounded by a fringe of cattails and reeds. Two dozen huts, leather skins supported on frames of lodgepole birch, were gathered in a line along the near shore. Activity churned the water along the sandy beach off to the side, where the children of the tribe — under the watchful eye of Imma Grandam — frolicked in the shallows. The village had always been the keystone of peace and serenity in Warred's life, yet when he looked at it now he saw it for the crude and helpless gathering that it was.

"Warred — look!" Shayne's voice was a moan, and she staggered against him, her eyes turned to the south.

Spinning, the plainsman saw a darkness against the horizon — a place where the sky was too dark a shade of blue. A chill penetrated his guts as he saw that azure shape move, discerned massive wings pulsing regally downward.

"That's a dragon," he whispered, recognizing the shape even as his mind tried to cast the identification away. This thing in the sky was at least twenty miles away, yet when

the barbarian extended his hand horizontally he couldn't encompass the vast wingspan.

"But it's too big!" Shayne declared, shaking her head. "It isn't — it can't be!"

Watching those mighty wings drive downward, Warred recognized the same cadence of the dull thunder. The sound lagged far behind each actual wingstroke, but when he counted the pulses, he realized that each beat was followed by a corresponding thud through the air and ground.

Only after he had watched three cycles of those awful spans did the plainsman realize that the dragon swept closer with unbelievable speed. "The village!" he gasped.

Shayne had already started down the long, grassy incline. "Mama! Papa! Run — everybody!"

Her cries brought all activity in the valley to a sudden halt. Children stood in the water, looking up the hill, while women paused at the scraping of hides they tanned upon stout racks. Several warriors, sensing the urgency in her cries, snatched up weapons, trotting into the little lane that ran between the two rows of lodges.

Warred sprinted beside Shayne, his heart locked in an awful certainty: there was no place to hide, no way to fight a beast like this. They could only hope that it passed this inconsequential plains village, ignored the rude gathering as beneath its notice. Thankfully, the monster was now out of sight behind the rim of the valley. He prayed the beast's flight would carry it harmlessly by.

Warriors strung their bows with quick, sure movements, while Imma called the children from the water. All the villagers reacted instantly to the threat of unseen danger, women running into the huts with the tanned hides, or bringing fresh quivers to the dozen warriors in the lane. The thunder pounded again, a shock wave that sent concentric ripples shrinking and enlarging in the pond.

Warred's lungs strained. The long slope seemed endless, the downhill run to the village interminable. Then a vast shadow shrouded the valley, like a curtain drawn across the sun. The massive blue wings spanned the bowl from rim to rim. Those membranes stroked again, and this time the force of the downblast was a crack of thunder, strong enough to knock Warred and Shayne to the ground beyond the periphery of the huts.

A cacophony of terrified screams rose from the village as, struggling to his knees, the plainsman saw the dragon's neck arch, the deadly maw swoop downward. He wondered whether the beast were going to swallow the entire tribe.

Then he was blinded by an explosion of bright light, a flash that seared his eyes and seemed to burn its way into his skull. The ground heaved violently, tossing the barbarian into the air as a crushing explosion slammed his ears. After the first, excruciating onslaught, he heard only a loud ringing. Blinded and deafened, he crashed to the ground flat on his back and lay stunned.

The smell of ozone confirmed that the dragon had spit a bolt of lightning, but still he could see nothing, heard only that deafening numbing chime. For an eternity Warred strained to move, flailing with nerveless hands and fingers until he could roll onto his belly and groggily

push himself to his hands and knees. Echoes of sound still shrilled in his ears, and his vision was masked by swimming spots of darkness, with a fringe of sky and grass visible around the edges.

In that periphery he saw Shayne, face down and sobbing. Staggering to his feet, he took her arms and helped her rise. His vision cleared slowly, though the dark spots still danced in the center of his eyes. When he scanned the sky he saw no sign of the dragon.

And when he looked down, he saw little indication of the Sandhill village. The huts were gone, though a few skeletal lodgepoles jutted pathetically from the ground. A great furrow marked the place where the lane had been, and the trench was fringed by many splotches of slick, wet color. Warred gagged when he realized that these were pieces of the warriors who had assembled there — all that remained of the bravest men of the tribe.

Staggering forward, with Shayne gasping at his side, Warred moved through the shattered village. Through the ringing he began to hear the wails of children, the agonized groaning of grievously injured adults. He felt a chill and flinched at returning shadow, fearing that the dragon had come again. Looking up, he was astounded to see a blanket of thick clouds sweep across the sun, blocking out the day, churning relentlessly northward.

"How did that happen?" he wondered vaguely, recalling the pure blue sky of the morning — and then realizing with cold certainty that these stormclouds had come in the wake of the mighty dragon.

Imma Grandam came forward, her weathered face pale, her eyes wet with unshed tears. Warred found her leaning over Indigo. That warrior's once-piercing eyes were pale and opaque, and his powerful legs had been blasted off at the knees.

"He's alive!" Imma asserted. "Help him!"

Numbly, Warred knelt beside the groaning man, while the matron hobbled into the wreckage to look for more survivors. Indigo hissed in pain but remained rigid as the young warrior wrapped the blistered stumps of his legs in tattered cloth.

Thunder rumbled from the sky, a steady, rolling drumbeat that once again caused the young plainsman to flinch in fear. Yet this was in fact the angry crashing of dark, surging clouds, the promise of a violent deluge.

"It's a storm," Shayne said, squatting at Indigo's side and stroking the wounded man's feverish forehead. "An awful storm..."

Warred shivered under an icy wind. This valley was a strange place now, bleak, desolate... dead.

"We've got to leave here, go away," Warred said, knowing that the tribe's ancestral plains were no longer their own. This blue dragon was not so much a creature as a force of nature, a thing that had altered, even destroyed, the world the tribe had always known.

"You're right," Shayne agreed. Others came numbly forward, women and children who had escaped the brunt of the explosive attack, some burned or deafened, all of their spirits chilled by a moment of instantaneous destruction.

In the midst of chaos and grief, it began to rain.



The tracks showed that the ice bear had wandered far from its usual habitat. Normally the mighty carnivores dwelled around the fringes of the great glacier, easily a hundred miles south of this flat tundra. Seals and salmon were plentiful along the icy coast of the Southern Courrain Ocean, where the temperature rarely surpassed the freezing point. Furthermore, the frosty backdrop of Icewall glacier and its attendant snowfields provided the white-coated predators with a concealment nearly as effective as any spell of invisibility.

Yet for two days the hunter had followed the massive paw prints on a trail leading steadily northward. The bear's tracks had proceeded across the tundra in a straight line, almost as if the creature had some pressing engagement somewhere in the Plains of Dust.

Or perhaps some compelling reason to depart its native realm.

Kerric stomped his hooves in agitation, tucking his chin in a frown that sent his auburn mane cascading around his right arm. His left hand he held high, the powerful longbow — already strung with a heavy sinew of braided beargut — clenched ready in his brawny fist. His quiver was slung low across his shoulder, easily accessible below his belly, while a bundle of spare arrows was strapped across his withers.

Maintaining his steady trot, Kerric reflected on another fact. Although he had been following the bear for only two days, the centaur's pace was much faster than his quarry's. Thus, the ice bear itself must have maintained this compass-hard course to the north for an even longer time.

Strange behavior, to be sure.

Hunching forward again, Kerric tried to use his mane and hindquarters to screen his humanoid back from the chill wind gusting against his skin. He grimaced with the chagrin of the hunter who is forced to allow his scent to precede him, but he continued along the trail, knowing that the ice bear presented a terrible menace to the herd. The tracks led straight into the centaur plains, and there the animal would be a lethal threat, especially to the capricious and defenseless foals.

Soon Kerric felt stinging prickles against his skin, saw a wave of sparkling ice crystals sweep past. The frosty specks whipped horizontally, driven by the rising wind, and he wished that he'd brought a cloak. Like all centaurs, Kerric disdained the use of clothing as an unnecessary encumbrance, except during occasions such as this unnatural, late-season storm. Huffing noisily, he shivered, thinking longingly of Darr, and with that he was glad that he had left their single, shared fur with his mare.

Kerric turned about, snorting as he glared to the south, trying to get a feel for this sudden storm. The air was a haze of murky white, and the icy particles — the stuff was too tiny, too brittle, to be called snow — slashed against his face, forcing him to squint. Icewall Glacier was far away, yet he had the sense that its polar presence was an imminent menace.

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Suddenly the centaur gasped, jolted by an electric sensation. Shivering, he tried to suppress the feeling that the great storm had eyes, that it stared at him from the heights of the bright and colorless sky. A vision of a monstrous head, of limbs vast and fanlike spreading to encompass the world, penetrated the chill of the storm so powerfully that Kerric felt as though his hooves were frozen to the ground.

With an effort of will he tore his gaze away, rearing high, pivoting to the north. The tracks of the bear formed a line of regular patches of crushed grass. Outlines of ice clung to the edges of each shallow depression, highlighting and underscoring the regularity of the bear's path. Yet the pelting of the snow grew harder; within an hour, Kerric knew, the brittle missiles would mask the tracks beneath a blanket of uniform white.

Cantering now, Kerric loped along the ice bear's tracks. He adjusted his quiver across his belly, insuring that he could reach an arrow in a split second. His dark eyes peered this way and that, trying to penetrate the thickening veil of the snowstorm.

In his vigilance, Kerric began to see that the ice bear was not the biggest danger facing the herd. There was a strangeness to this storm that boded deep and fundamental ill, a feeling typified by the ominous presence he had felt to the south. He wondered again if it had been this force that had propelled the ice bear into such an uncharacteristic migration.

Like a silent avalanche, a white shape rushed from the gusting storm, charging Kerric's left side, visible only as a flash of movement in the periphery of the hunter's eye. When the centaur whirled, the bear made a noise

like the crumbling of a great iceberg, a thunderous roar that enveloped Kerric in a wave of sound. The predator was a monstrous mound of white fur, jaws gaping to reveal a pink tongue between black lips and long, yellowed teeth.

Kerric's bow was drawn, an arrow poised for flight even before the instant of recognition. He shot, then drew back a second missile as the first shaft penetrated the bear's chest. The next arrow plunged through white pelt and heavy sinew, burying itself to the feathers in the tangle of fur below the animal's throat.

With a wet snarl, the bear pounced toward Kerric's chest. Casting his bow away, the centaur reared. Twin hooves, shaggy fetlocks trailing like battle pennants, drove into the animal's wounded breast as the bear's 'blunt but powerful claws ripped through the skin of Kerric's forelegs. The centaur tried to ignore the steaming pain as he drew his last weapons, twin daggers, blades that would have been called short swords if wielded by man or elf.

Arms extended, the centaur pitched forward with a driving thrust of his powerful rear legs, surprising the bear by lurching straight into the embrace of the wide-swept paws. Kerric drove his hands together with all his strength, stabbing one keen blade into either side of the ice bear's neck. He gasped as fangs ripped the tough sinew of his chest, but the powerful hands maintained their grip.

Desperately the centaur reared back, dragging the keen-edged weapons sideways through the bear's grisly flesh. Kerric's right hand and foreleg grew warm and wet as the creature slumped, and he knew at last that he had sliced the throbbing jugular.

With a groan the centaur staggered backward, allowing the corpse of the bear to fall onto the frozen ground. Kerric gingerly probed the bite wound in his left shoulder, then inspected the scrapes clawed into his forelegs. With relief he found that the cuts, though painful, were not deep.

He packed the gouges with handfuls of ice, noticing as he scooped the frigid stuff that the short grass was already obscured by snow. When he raised his head and tried to look south, the icy pinpricks of the storm quickly forced his face away — and for that brief glimpse, he had seen only a few paces into the raging blizzard. Pivoting on his rear legs, Kerric shivered, trying to hunch his head between his shoulders, to shelter himself in the meager insulation of his mane. He thought, fleetingly, of skinning the ice bear — the tribe had only a few such warm pelts — but the sense of urgency and foreboding within him would not allow for the delay.

Clearly the bear had been fleeing the source, the master, of this storm. In attacking, the animal had merely reacted by instinct to the hunter on its trail. Kerric felt a powerful regret that he had killed the mighty creature, had forced it to fight when in fact it had wanted only to escape.

Why hadn't the centaur seen the truth sooner? He could have spared the bear and gained for his herd an extra day or two of warning. No matter; the icy gale was upon them, and the time for action was now.

He galloped toward the low vale where he knew the rest of the herd would gather to wait out the storm. His mission was clear, his task urgent. To remain on the tundra was to perish.

Like ice bear, the centaurs would flee from the coming ice.



"Your magic... with the rocks... . You've got to try!"

Shayne's voice reached Warred from somewhere distant, a place that was warm and safe. Yet, as his awareness returned and he heard the howling wind, saw the white blast of the snow, the plainsman knew that no such place existed.

At least, none that was within reach of the tribe.

Shaking his head, Warred tried to move, realizing that he had fallen headlong into a snowdrift. His hands and feet were numb, the stinging pain of frostbite at last giving way to a deeper chill. While he could see the lashing needles of ice, no longer did he feel their sting against his face.

In the murk of the storm, the rest of the tribe was a file fading into gray. Naturally, they had stopped when he, the trail-breaker, had fallen in the increasingly deep snow.

How many days since they had left the ruined village? Warred couldn't even remember, although the events immediately following the attack remained etched in sharp, mental relief.

The devastation had been brutal, but not universal.

Besides himself and legless Indigo, two other warriors, Tarn Elkhorn and Blak Eaglewing, had been on the fringes of the lightning blast and had survived. The former had been burned badly, and the latter, while unmarked on the skin, had been knocked unconscious by the attack. When Shayne had pressed through the ruins to find him, Blak's breathing and pulse had been shallow but stable.

The children who had been swimming in the water-hole gathered nearby, silent and wide-eyed, but physically unharmed. Likewise Imma Grandam and several women who had been tending to chores beyond the village — they, too, survived the ruinous blast. Using the few lodge poles left, working in an icy rain, the villagers had built litters so that the three wounded warriors could be dragged along.

"Go... go on with haste, while you can!" the grievously injured Indigo had gasped. "Leave us!"

He had gestured to the side, and Warred knew that the bold plainsman spoke for Tarn and Blak as well as for himself. Indeed, he said no more than any barbarian warrior would have in the same situation. Life on the plains was hard, and the tribe had long ago realized that they could not drag along those who could not care for themselves.

"We are too few to leave anyone behind," Warred replied. "We remain together." He spoke with the certainty of leadership, and no one had thought to question him.

All of them sensed the need to flee, the reality that their tribal home was gone forever. Thunder continued to smash from the sky, lightning lashing the crests of the rolling hills. Chilly winds whipped sheets of rain as the miserable band departed across the muddy ground.

The rain had changed to snow on the second day of the migration, and the storm had grown progressively worse since then. Now the icy blanket on the flatlands was nearly waist-deep to Warred, tallest of the survivors. He had been forcing his way through the drifts, followed by Shayne and the other women, all of whom took turns dragging the travois bearing the three injured warriors. Though Blak had shown no sign of regaining consciousness, the Sandhill survivors were determined to carry him as long as he breathed. Then came the file of children, plodding miserably through the trough the adults pressed into the snow. Imma Grandam brought up the rear, urging the youngsters to keep pace. Her normally strident voice was uncharacteristically tender as she encouraged each flagging boy or girl to find the strength to continue.

They had trekked for long, numbing miles until, at last, the storm had overwhelmed them. Warred had stumbled forward, bringing the whole column to a halt. Nearly buried in the drift, he had been willing to rest there, to surrender to the eternal frost. He realized that he must have been unconscious for some time, since all his tribemates had gathered behind him.

"Look!" Shayne was trying to attract Warred's attention. With an effort, he forced himself to focus upon her words. "This is why you fell — it's a rockfield!"

Warred pushed himself out of the shoulder-high drift and saw that Shayne had kicked the snow away from

several boulders. Such swaths of stony ground, similar to the Lookout near the former village, were not uncommon on the plains — though this one had been rendered invisible beneath the wintry blanket.

Three sturdy boys, their ruddy faces raw and blistered by frost, were already pulling at several rocks. A few of the stones came free, but most were frozen solidly in place.

"The tribe knows about your stone magic. I told them," Shayne said. "And we'll help you."

Warred looked hopelessly at the rimed boulders, remembering his failure the last time he had tried to work the stone magic — in warm weather, with small, dry rocks. Again the allure of oblivion, of utter surrender, threatened to draw him down.

Then he saw the desperation, the fear, on the faces of Shayne, of the boys, of the rest of his mute tribesmates. Huddled against the snow, they watched him silently, and he knew that he had to move.

Warred forced himself to his feet. "I'll try," he said. He gestured to the patch of flat ground he had crossed just before reaching the rockfield. "We'll put the stones here."

"How many do you need?" asked Shayne, as the three youths pulled another boulder from the snow-covered rockfield.

"As many as we can get." He turned to Imma Grandam. "I need some of you to stomp a clearing in the snow around here, around the cairn. Just walk back and forth enough to pack it."

While the matron formed her young charges into a marching rank, Warred turned to help with the rock gathering. He, Shayne, and the trio of willing boys kicked through the snow over the rockfield, clearing away enough of the powdery blanket to find stones of a uniform size, a little bigger than a human skull. Pushing, prying smashing with their feet, they tried to break the boulders free. Warred broke his dagger chipping against the frost, and all of them were staggering with weariness, but after an hour they had gathered enough rocks to make a respectable cairn.

The deep snow had been stomped flat in a large swath surrounding the pyramidal mound. For a moment Warred paused, acutely aware of the many eyes, hopeful and uncomprehending, that watched him. Indigo waved a hand weakly, and Warred knelt beside the legless warrior who was still strapped to his travois.

"I tell you again — leave us behind!" hissed the wounded man. "You can go on, get through the storm without us."

Warred shook his head. "We might make it for another hour, maybe two. But then we'd be stopped again, and for what? No, my friend. We shall stick together."

The injured warrior fell backward with a gasp of pain. He waved a muscular hand, the feeble gesture incongruous from a man who had once been so powerful.

"And you really have hopes in this... this toy magic of yours?"

"There's no wood for a fire, and no way we can keep going through this storm. We need warmth — or none of us will live out the night. My magic is our only hope." He wished he were as confidant as he tried to sound to Indigo.

"You hope to survive for now, and then move on when the storm lets up?" asked the warrior, his cloudy eyes unfocused, yet unsettling.

"Yes," Warred replied, knowing that Indigo sensed the same truth as he himself: this storm would not soon be relaxing its grip on the plains. Like the thunder of the blue dragon, the icy gale from the south signalled a change that was far more permanent than any errant late-season blizzard.

"Good luck, then," replied the wounded man. "You always were a dreamer, Stareye. May your dreams keep us warm through a very cold night."

"Thank you, my friend."

Again Warred felt the eyes of the children upon him. He sensed Shayne at his side as he knelt before the cairn. The pile was as high as his head, and he reached wide with his arms, embracing as many of the frost-coated stones as he could.

Trying to relax, he groped for the glimmerings of magic, the power that had allowed him, on those few previous occasions, to bring a wash of warmth from a much smaller mound of stones. Always before it had been an engaging and amusing trick, one he had never shared with anyone else — until his ill-fated attempt to show Shayne. Now he felt a deep, gnawing fear, as if the feat had been a mere trick of his imagination, a delusion for himself alone.

His fingers were numb. The rocks were frozen, utterly lifeless through the stiff leather of his mittens. The fundamental power of the world, the arcane heat he had earlier tapped, might have been the lingering haze of a dream for all the promise he felt now.

With an angry gesture, Warred tore the mittens from his hands. He heard Shayne gasp as he pressed his bare fingers to the stone. Almost immediately they froze fast.

He leaned forward, pressing harder, as if to sink his frozen digits right through the solid surface of the rock. Toppling, he saw a great pit open below him, a hole lined with frost, with icicles dangling like white fangs into the darkness. The pit was very, very deep, a dangerous place to go...

But in the bottom was fire.

Desperately straining, Warred reaching for that heat, mumbling incoherently. A great well of black space surrounded the spark he sensed, and that darkness was a void that threatened to swallow him.

I will not fall! He commanded himself, gritting his teeth, reaching for the hint of lifegiving warmth. The force before him was a dangerous thing, a dark and potent power that yawned wide, an invitation tinged strongly with menace.

His fingers closed around something painful, something that burned like a stab of hot metal. Crying out, he pulled, as the shadows rose up to engulf him.

This is what it is like to die, he saw with a sense of pure, bleak horror.

And then the darkness devoured him.



Kerric pulled Darr close, felt the proud mare shiver against him. Though her torso and shoulders were wrapped in a heavy fur, her strength had been sapped by the relentless fury of the storm. For days the brutal, unnatural cold had assaulted the herd. The trackless tundra was buried by sweeping drifts, and the slashing of wind and snow was an assault of metallic barbs, cutting, jabbing, hacking.

Still the centaurs pushed forward. The snow cover reached past their knees, but the powerful stallions breasted through even the highest drifts, breaking a trail. Heads down, diligently keeping the colts and fillies in tow, the band pressed through the plains that had been their ancestral home.

Now they were plains that none of them recognized.

Even in the deepest winters, the snow had never lashed them like this. Manes and beards were coated with frost, and the few cloaks possessed by the tribe — such as the bearskin now protecting Darr — were passed among those with the greatest need. Even so, there were not enough to shelter more than a dozen at a time, barely a third of the tribe.

The strongest, such as Kerric, had gone without clothing through the entire course of the storm. Now the stallion tried to flex his powerful hands and found with dismay that his fingers were numb. Stinging pain shot through his arms and shoulders as he clapped his palms together. Relentlessly the wind howled in his ears, lashing the thick mane of hair about his face.

Snorting angrily, Kerric squinted as he tried to see the rest of the herd through the white fury of the storm. He detected a few huddled shapes plodding miserably in his wake, and he had to take it on faith that the rest of the centaurs were coming along behind. Each face was a mask of numb misery, lacking hope, bewildered and frightened by the vicious onslaught of this sinister winter. He knew that, one by one, the centaurs would gradually succumb to the enveloping ice.

Their only hope of survival lay in starting a fire, but there was no fuel to be seen — and no way to ignite even dry tinder in the midst of this gale. The scrubby brush that provided most of the tribe's firewood was buried by drifts, and the gently rolling ground offered not even the hope of an effective windbreak.

Darr moaned softly behind him, and the misery in the sound broke Kerric's heart. But there was nothing he could offer, no hope of succor. Around them was only snow and ice and wind and darkness.

"Someone else should have the cloak, now. I can make it for a while without," Darr declared, raising her head and bravely tossing her long, ice-coated mane. "Give it to Glendinna."

"We lost her a few hours ago." Kerric shook his head sadly. "Her bad hoof gave out, and she limped off to the side."

Darr's huge eyes grew moist, the tears freezing on her cheeks. They all knew there was nothing to be done for a lame centaur, not when the rest of the band was forced to migrate. Still, the loss of the elder mare only served to highlight the desperate condition of the herd.

"You keep the cloak," Kerric encouraged.

"No!" Darr said, with an angry shake of her head. She shrugged the bearskin from her shoulders, turned to see the gray-maned form of Wander plodding through the snow just behind. "Your turn!" she called, pausing to allow the elder male to reach her side. Gratefully Wander pulled the skin over his own shoulders, which were already white with frost.

Resolutely, Darr put her head down and plodded along close behind Kerric. His heart swelled with admiration for her courage, while at the same time he was dragged down by a sense of consuming sorrow. He knew that, at best, the cloak meant a difference of a few hours in the short future spans of their lives.

"What's that! Kerric — look!" cried Darr, pointing.

He saw it immediately: a glow of orange-red light, powerful and radiant through the ice storm, gleaming in the darkness. "Could it be a fire?" he asked.

With another step he answered his own question: of course not, for there were no flames. It was more like the glow within a forge, the coals within the ovens that centaur smiths used to fashion their fine steel. But it was an alluring sight nevertheless, a beacon summoning them from the frost and storm. As if drawn by a lodestone the centaurs veered toward the phenomenon, and as they drew closer Kerric actually felt the heat against his face!

Then the wind and snow faded, as if the stallion had stepped through a doorway into a sheltered chamber. Though there were no walls, the sensation of a room within the storm remained. A patch of snowless ground surrounded the source of the radiance, and the wind seemed almost balmy, damp with steam.

And it was a warm room! The glow emanated from a large pile of rocks, a wave of palpable heat accompanied by a pale, surreal brightness. The boulders at the top of the mound glowed red, and yellow heat radiated from the depths of the stony cairn, brightly shining from the gaps between individual boulders.

So intent was he on the glorious warmth that not until Darr tugged at his wrist did Kerric notice the warm place was occupied. A small band of humans, ragged, weary, and frostbitten, clustered on the far side of the glowing rocks. Wide-eyed, they stared at the centaurs, and Kerric was startled to see that most of them were mere children.

Instinctively the centaur reached for his bow — and was shocked to discover that his numb fingers couldn't close around the wooden shaft. A strapping boy rose from the midst of the huddled humans, and Kerric saw the glint of his steel blade. More of the herd pressed forward, stomping and snorting in the face of the strange heat and this ragged band of humans.

"No!" The word was croaked by a prone man who, though clearly weakened, struggled to a sitting position, aided by a young woman whose beauty shone even through the hunger and frostbite of a long march. The youth with the sword hesitated but still held his weapon ready, while the woman kept a hand on the man's shoulder as she glared at the centaurs with dark, wary eyes.

"Hold!" urged Kerric as two young stallions pushed forward. Either could have crushed the human lad with a strong kick, but they reared back at his own command.

"These are not our enemies," he concluded.

"Please... come ahead," said the man, gesturing toward the glowing mound of rocks.

"Will you... will you share our warmth?" asked the young plainswoman. She held her firm chin high as she greeted the centaurs from her seat on the ground.

"We are grateful," Kerric said, bowing formally from the waist, then sidestepping to allow other centaurs to press forward, to close on the lifegiving warmth. Shivering and stomping, with the foals huddling between the elder's forelegs, the entire herd emerged from the storm. The clearing was large enough — barely — for them all.

The storm raged beyond the circle of warmth, but somehow the snow that swept toward the fire melted, evaporating into steam as soon as it entered the radius of comfort. Even the ground, rendered muddy by the initial snowmelt, had dried and hardened.

Kerric found himself beside the man and woman who had invited them forward. The centaur leaned down, murmuring his thanks, looking closer at the young man who, though standing now, swayed unevenly on his feet. His ailment was clearly the result of something other than the cold — from the haunted look in his eyes, the sheen of perspiration on his skin, Kerric guessed that it was a deeper, more dangerous affliction. With a groan, the fellow sank to his knees.

"Your friend — is he ill?" asked the centaur, as the woman again cradled the fellow's pale head.

"Warred is weakened certainly, and perhaps wounded as well. It was he who called up this magic fire. The cost to his spirit and his body was dire."

"Yet because he paid it, two tribes shall live through this dark night," Darr said.

The young man turned his face upward, his eyes fixed with a gaze that seemed to stare right through the looming centaur. Kerric shuddered at a realization that the young man was truly, fundamentally haunted, menaced by a horror mankind was not intended to know.

"You are welcome to stay here with us, to share the warmth of my magic for as long as it lasts," said the plainsman called Warred. "It is good that we shall not die alone."

"You are so certain that you will die here?" Kerric asked.

"We can't go on," he replied, shrugging resignedly at the thick blanket of snow coating the ground beyond their warm cocoon.

"Perhaps there is a way," Kerric replied. He had taken in the children, and the three injured men on their litters. They must have been dragged, at tremendous cost, through the growing drifts. "Our endurance failed because of the frost and chill — and your fire will certainly give us the stamina to go on. Now, our backs may give you the strength to come along."

"That is a brave offer, and kind," Warred replied. His eyes flickered with growing hope, meeting Kerric's in a piercing gaze. "The Dustplain River lies to the north... and beyond we may find safety."

"I know that river — we can reach it in a day's march from here," the centaur replied.

"But even then we can't be sure that we'll pass beyond the storm," Shayne noted.

"This magic of yours? Kerric gestured at the magical fire. "Can you do it again?"

For a moment fear welled upward in the young barbarian's eyes, but then he blinked, drew a ragged breath, and nodded. "Yes," he replied, straightening. "Yes, I can."

"Then we shall carry you to the river and cross on the ice. If the storm still assails us, you must warm our tribes again with your magic. And we will continue as far as necessary — our strength and your fire will keep us all moving."

"Could you carry all of us?" Shayne asked.

"And your belongings," replied Kerric, looking at the leather cloaks, blankets and furs borne by the plainsfolk. "A human rider on a centaur, both wrapped in one of these pelts, can only help each other withstand the cold."

The young barbarian pushed himself to his feet, standing more strongly as he took the centaur's brawny hand.

"Let us go then," he said.

"It is agreed." Kerric nodded. Together we shall survive."



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Ian's Games

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Mutant Comics

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Ralph's Comic Corner

Roleplayers

Scenario Game & Hobby Shoppe

Third Planet

Tiger Crane Kempo Karate

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War House

CO

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Pensacola 904-438-9900

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IA

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Dreamland Comics Schaumburg 708-529-6060
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Game Warden Naperville 708-778-0870
Gamers Paradise #2 Norridge 708-456-1422
Gamers Paradise #7 Chicago Ridge 708-499-1121
Gamers Paradise #9 St. Charles 708-513-1233
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IN

Books, Comics & Things Jefferson Fort Wayne 219-436-0159
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Woodinville

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Milwaukee

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Casper

307-2

Convention Calendar Policies

This column is a service to our readers worldwide. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guideline must be observed.

In order to ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be either typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short and succinct.

The information given in the listing must include the following, in this order:

1. Convention title and dates held
2. Site and location
3. Guests of honor (if applicable)
4. Special events offered
5. Registration fees or attendance requirements, and,
6. Address(es) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

Convention flyers, newsletters and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted. Unless stated otherwise, all dollar values given for U.S. and Canadian conventions are in U.S. currency.

WARNING: We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Our wide circulation ensures that over a quarter of a million readers worldwide see each issue. Accurate information is your responsibility.

Copy deadlines are the first Monday of each month, four months prior to the on sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the first Monday of September. Announcements for North American and Pacific conventions must be mailed to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, 201 Sheridan Springs Rd., Lake Geneva, WI 53147, U.S.A. Announcements for Europe must be posted an additional month before the deadline to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Limited, 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom.

If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at TSR, Inc., (414) 248-3625 (U.S.A.). Questions or changes concerning European conventions should be directed to TSR Limited, (0223) 212517 (U.K.).



September Conventions

Round Table Gaming Society

September 7 SC

The University of South Carolina, Russel House. Events: *Magic: the Gathering** tournaments including a type I tournament offering a Black Lotus, a sealed deck tournament, and a type II beginner's tournament. Registration: varies. Round Table Gaming Society, University of South Carolina, P.O. Box 80018, Columbia, SC 29225, or e-mail: uscrtgs@aol.com.

Andcon

September 12-15 OH

The Seagate Convention Center and Radisson Hotel, Toledo. Events: role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: RPGA® Network events, *Magic: the Gathering* and other CGG tournaments, weekend Vampire Interactive Role-playing event, computer gaming. Registration: \$24.95 (daily and visitor passes available). Andon Unlimited, P.O. Box 1740, Renton, WA 98057-1740, or e-mail: Andon@aol.com.

Wincon

September 13-15 *

Ramada Marlborough, Winnipeg, Manitoba. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other

- ◆ Australian convention
- ◆ Canadian convention
- ◆ European convention

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activities: auction. Registration: varies. GITS, P.O. Box 28073, 1453 Henderson Hwy, Winnipeg, MB, R2G 4E9, Canada.

Falcon '96

September 14 *

Lord Nelson Hotel, Halifax, Nova Scotia. Guests: Robert Sawyer, Peter Francis, Michael Gallant, and Luisa Nadalini. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: cabaret, costume contest, art show, and auction. Registration: varies. Falcon, P.O. Box 36123, Halifax, NS, B3J 3S9, Canada, or e-mail: gtucker@fox.nstn.ns.ca.

Fron 14

September 21-22

Buergerhaus Griesheim, Schwarzerlenweg 57, Frankfurt. Guests: James Wallis and Andrew Rilstone. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: demos, tournaments, workshops, movies, and a miniatures painting contest. Roleplaying and Simulation Game Club, Martin Kliehm, In der Roemerstadt 164, 60439 Frankfurt, Germany, or e-mail: martin.kliehm@frankfurt.netsurf.de.

Bogglecon 4

September 21 PA

Wind Gap Legion Hall on Broadway, Wind Gap. Events: LIVING CITY™ tournaments,

card, board, and role-playing games, and free games demonstrations. Other activities: dealers, games auction, raffle, and canned food drive. Registration: \$3, or \$5 at the door. Most game events cost \$1. For more information, send SASE to M. Griffith, 118 S. Broadway, Wind Gap, PA 18091.

Civic Con

September 22

IN Hammond Civic Center, Hammond. Events: card, role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: comic show. Registration: \$2. Atlantis Productions, 2654 Forest Park Dr., Dyer, IN 46311, or e-mail: atlantis@tsrcom.com.

Cog Con

September 27-29

MO The Miner Recreation Building at the University of Missouri, Rolla. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: tournaments. Registration: \$10 preregistered, \$12 on site. CogCon, P.O. Box 1939, Rolla, MO 65402, or e-mail: CogConIV@aol.com.

Hostile Aircraft Aces

Tournament

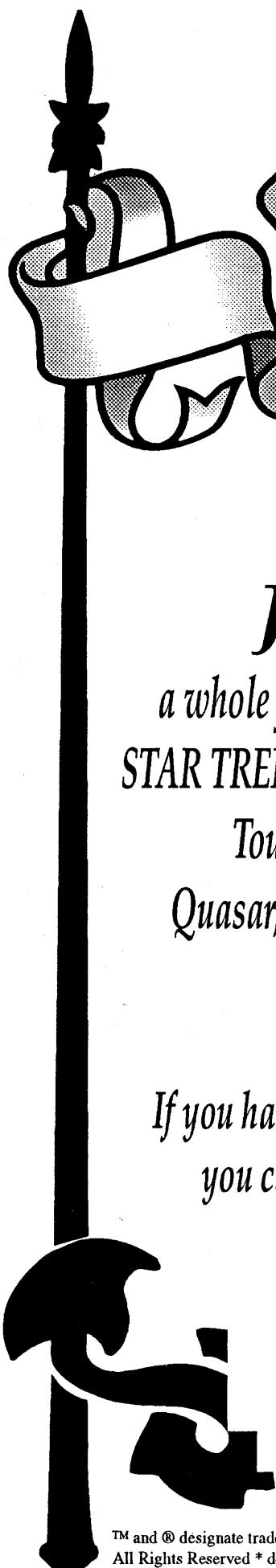
September 27-29

NY Travel Lodge, Kingston. Events: open gaming, and a hostile aircraft tournament. Registration: \$20 preregistered, \$25 on site. Goblin-

Important:

DRAGON® Magazine does not publish phone numbers for conventions. Be certain that any address you send us is complete and correct.

To ensure that your convention listing makes it into our files, enclose a self-addressed stamped postcard with your first convention notice; we will return the card to show that it was received. You also might send a second notice one week after mailing the first. Mail your listing as early as possible, and always keep us informed of any changes. Please do not send convention notices by fax, as this method has not proven reliable.



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tooth Enterprises, 46 Highland St., Reading, MA 01867.

Shorecon '96
September 27-29 NJ

Berkeley Carteret, Asbury Park. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: a masquerade, auction, art show, anime, a dance, etc. Registration: \$20 preregistered, \$25 on site. Multigenre Inc., 266 Spruce Drive, Brick, NJ 08723.

Nuke-Con
September 28-29 NE

Holiday Inn Central, Omaha. Guests: Tom Prusa and Fredd Groham. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: tournaments. Registration: varies. Nuke-Con, 13115 Josephine Circle, Omaha, NE 68138, or e-mail: nuke-con@synergy.net.

Organized Kahn Fusion – Battletech
September 28-29 PA

Newberry Town Fire Hall, Etters. This is a Battletech*-only con featuring single, lance, free for all, and mechwarrior games. Other activities: dealers and a miniatures painting contest. Registration: varies. M. Forner's Games Only Emporium, 230 S. 8th St., Lemoyne, PA 17043.

October Conventions

AtCon III
October 3-6 TX

Ramada Inn, Austin. Special guests: Allen Varney, Scott Haring, Jeff Dee and Aaron Allston. Events: AD&D® role-playing. Other activities: win ticket to AtSea. John Paul Carney, 3816 S. Lamar #901, Austin, TX 78764.

Archon 20
October 4-6 IL

Gateway Center and adjacent Holiday Inn, Collinsville. Special guests: Ray Bradbury

and Ray Harryhausen. Events: panel discussions, art show and gaming. Other activities: 24-hour videos. Registration: varies. Archon 20, P.O. Box 483, Chesterfield, MO 63006-0483, or e-mail: <http://www.ecc.cc.mo.us/~randy/arch20.html>.

Cangames
October 4-6 *

Ottawa Congress Centre, Ottawa, Ontario. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: auction, seminars, dealers, and miniatures painting contest. Registration: varies. Cangames, 6930 Sunset Blvd., Greely, ONT, K4P 1C5, Canada, or e-mail: cangames@iosphere.net.

Westward Ho 1
October 5 TX

Best Western, Midland. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: dealers and open gaming. Registration: \$4 preregistered, \$5 on site. Westward Ho 1, P.O. Box 9805, Midland, TX 79708.

Necronomicon '96
October 11-13 FL

Camberly Inn, Tampa. Guests: Tim Powers, Michael Straczynski, and Brinke Stevens. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: Ygor party, panels, art show, dealers, and masquerade. Registration: \$18 preregistered, \$25 on site. Necronomicon, P.O. Box 2076, River-view, FL 33569 or e-mail: 74273.1607@compuserve.com.

Knight Games '96
October 11-13 NY

Berkeley Carroll School, Brooklyn. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: tournaments. Registration: \$15 preregistered. Knight Games, P.O. Box 3041, Brooklyn, NY 11201 or e-mail: DSamuels@aol.com.

NovaCon '96
October 11-13 TX

The Memorial Student Center of Texas A&M University, College Station. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: tournaments, anime, open gaming, and art show. Registration: \$12. Alison Tashima, Director of Public Relations Memorial Student Center, Texas A&M, Box J-1, College Station, TX 77844-5117, or e-mail: mscnova@tamu.edu.

Pensacon
October 11-13 FL

Pensacola Grand Hotel, Pensacola. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: tournaments and auction. Registration: \$30. Pensacon, P.O. Box 9350, Pensacola, FL 32513.

TolCon XIV
October 12-13 OH

Scott Park Campus of the University of Toledo. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: dealers, an auction, and a miniatures painting contest. Registration: \$8/weekend, \$5/day. TolCon XIV, c/o Mind Games, 2115 N. Reynolds, Toledo, OH 43615.

HorrorconV
October 18-20 TX

Seven Oaks Resort, San Antonio. Events: role-playing, RPGA tournaments, board games, miniatures, computer and collectible card games. Registration: \$20/4 day pass, \$11/day. GMSA, 12205 Valley Oak, Live Oak, TX 79233 or e-mail: agriego@stic.net.

Kettering Game Convention XV
October 18-19 OH

Charles I. Lathrem Senior Center, Kettering. Events: role-playing, RPGA Network tournaments, board games, miniatures and collectible card games. Other activities:

movies and game auction. Registration: \$3. Bob von Gruenigen, 804 Willowdale Ave., Kettering, Ohio 45429.

Totally Tubular Con IV
October 18-20 CA

Days Inn, Fullerton. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: a LIVING CITY™ tournament. Registration: \$25 preregistered, \$30 on site. Totally Tubular Con, P.O. Box 18791, Anaheim Hills, CA 92871-8791, or e-mail: partdragon@aol.com.

Fantacon
October 26 IN

Porter County fairgrounds, Valparaiso. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: a card and comic show, tournaments. Registration: \$2. Atlantis Productions, 2654 Forest Park Dr., Dyer, IN 46311, or e-mail: atlantis@tsrcom.com.

Frontier Wars 11
October 26-27 IL

Miller Park Pavilion, Bloomington. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: an auction and a painting contest. Registration: \$10/weekend, \$6/day. Becky Spenser, 218 Kaiser Ave., Normal, IL 61761.

Gamma Con
October 26-27 TX

Four Points by Sheraton, Texarkana. Guests: Roxanne Longstreet, Cat Conrad, Joy Marie Ledet, and Elissa Mitchell. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: dealers, tournaments, art show and auction, and costume contest. Registration: \$25/weekend, \$15/day. Outpost Productions, 503 Courthouse Ave., New Boston, TX 75570.

Sibcon '96
October 26 PA

Days Inn Conference Center, Butler. Events: role-

playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: dealers, demos, and tournaments. Registration: \$5 preregistered, \$7 on site. Circle of Swords, P.O. Box 2126, Butler, PA 16003.

November Conventions

Ork Con '96 November 1-3

Panorama Hotel, Am oberen Marienbach 1. Schweinfurt. Special guests: Larry Elmore, Lester Smith, Mike Tinney, Ash Arnett, Brom, Jeff Grubb, Ken Whitman, Oliver Hoffman. Events: AD&D German Championship, DRAGON DICE, *Rage** and *Magic: the Gathering** tournaments. Registration: \$7, all weekend \$18. Robert Moore, Ruckertstr. 15, D-97421 Schweinfurt, Germany.

Novagcon '96 November 2-3 VA

Kena Temple Hall, Fairfax. Events: role-playing, painting contest, historical and science fiction miniature wargaming and card games. Registration: \$8 NOVAG members/\$10 general admission, free admission to game sponsors preregistered by October 1. Send SASE to: NOVAG, P.O. Box 7158, Reston, VA 22091.

Sci-Con 18 November 8-10 VA

Holiday Inn Executive Center, Virginia Beach. Special guests: artists Larry Elmore and Melissa Benson, SF author Charles Sheffield, and others. Events: *Starfleet Battles**, *Magic: the Gathering* and live-action games. Other activities: charity auction and workshops. Registration: \$20 thru October 1, \$30 at door. Hampton Roads Science Fiction Association, Inc., c/o Mark Shaffer, P.O. Box 9434, Hampton, Virginia 23670, or e-mail: scicon@earthlink.net or <http://www.earthlink.net/~scicon>.

Configuration 7 November 8-10 OK

University of Oklahoma campus, Norman. Events: AD&D, role-playing, *Vampire* Interactive theater, Convention Suite, and art show. Registration: \$9 weekend pass, \$9 Vampire pass, \$15 for both. War and Role Playing, 215-A OMU, Box 304, 900 Asp Avenue, Norman, OK 73019.

Fields of Honor November 8-10 IA

Adventure Lane Inn, Altoona. Contact Scott Friedmeyer, Comics Plus, 6501 Douglas Ave., Urbandale, IA 50322.

Chimaeracon '96 November 15-16 IN

French Lick Springs Resort, French Lick. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniature games. Other activities: *Star Trek* Con, dealers, home film contest, costume contest and ball. Tentative guests: Grace Lee Whitney, Bjo Trimble and NASA. Registration: varies. Send SASE to: Chimaera, P.O. Box 42, West Baden Springs, IN 47469.

Pentacon XII November 15-17 IN

Grand Wayne Center, Downtown Fort Wayne. Events: role-playing, RPGA Network tournaments, collectible card games, board games, auction, miniatures painting contest, charity raffle and art show. Other activities: seminars and computer games. Northeastern Indiana Gaming Association, P.O. Box 11174, Fort Wayne, IN 46856, or e-mail: 102654.230@compuserve.com.

Garden State Games Faire

November 21-24 NJ
Ramada Inn, East Windsor. Contact Andrew Dawson, 470 Ironstone Dr., Boyertown, PA 19512.

ShaunCon XXIII November 22-24 MO

Holiday Inn, Kansas City. Events: *LIVING City™*, *LIVING JUNGLE™*, and *LIVING DEATH™* tournaments, Masters and Grand Masters events. Other activities: *Amber**, *Call of Cthulhu**, *GURPS**, *Necromunda**, *Shadowrun**, *Star Wars** and many more. Registration: \$23 at door, discounts for pre-reg and/or RPGKC members. RPGKC, P.O. Box 7457, Kansas City, MO 64116-0157, or send e-mail: ShaunCon@aol.com or web: <http://users.aol.com/RPGKC/RPGKC.html>.

Pittsburgh Comicon November 23-24 PA

Pittsburgh Expomart, Monroeville. Special guests: John DeLancie, artist William Stout, and Marvel/DC artist Scott McDaniel. Events: *Magic: the Gathering*, *Star Wars CCG*, charity auctions and more.

By Edward B. Wagner



Other Activities: free autographs, comic and game sales. Registration: \$7 single-day pass. Michael George, 1002 Graham Ave., Windber, PA 15963.

SyndiCon '96 Nov 29-30, Dec 1 IN

Ramada Inn, Portage. Events: role-playing, cards, comics, miniatures, board games, painting contests, and RPGA Network events. Other activities: AD&D Arena Combat event, Friday the 13th, all-weekend Photo Killer game and interactive role-playing. Registration: \$15 until October 15, \$20 at door. SyndiCon '96, P.O. Box 1602, Portage, IN 46368.



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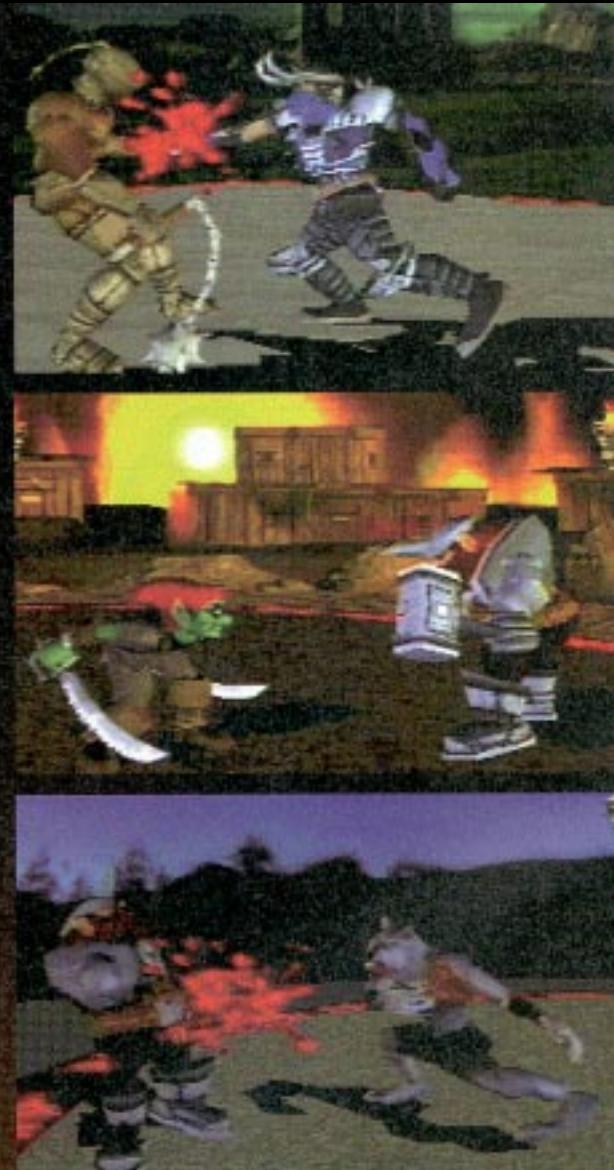
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Magical armor, helms, and shields

by Robert S. Mullin

illustrated by R.K. Post

The armor, helms, and shields described below appear in a wide variety of shapes, sizes, and styles. Armor types can appear in the form of leather to full plate; helms can range from simple skullcaps to helms that fully enclose the head; and shields may be simple bucklers or elaborate kite shields. Any contradictions to this rule are noted in the text of individual descriptions where applicable. Furthermore, although the items presented here are written assuming the users are generally human-sized, DMs should also assume versions exist that are sized for creatures who are larger or smaller.

All of these items may be used by any character, unless their use is restricted by class. Again, any examples to the contrary are noted in the text.

Armor

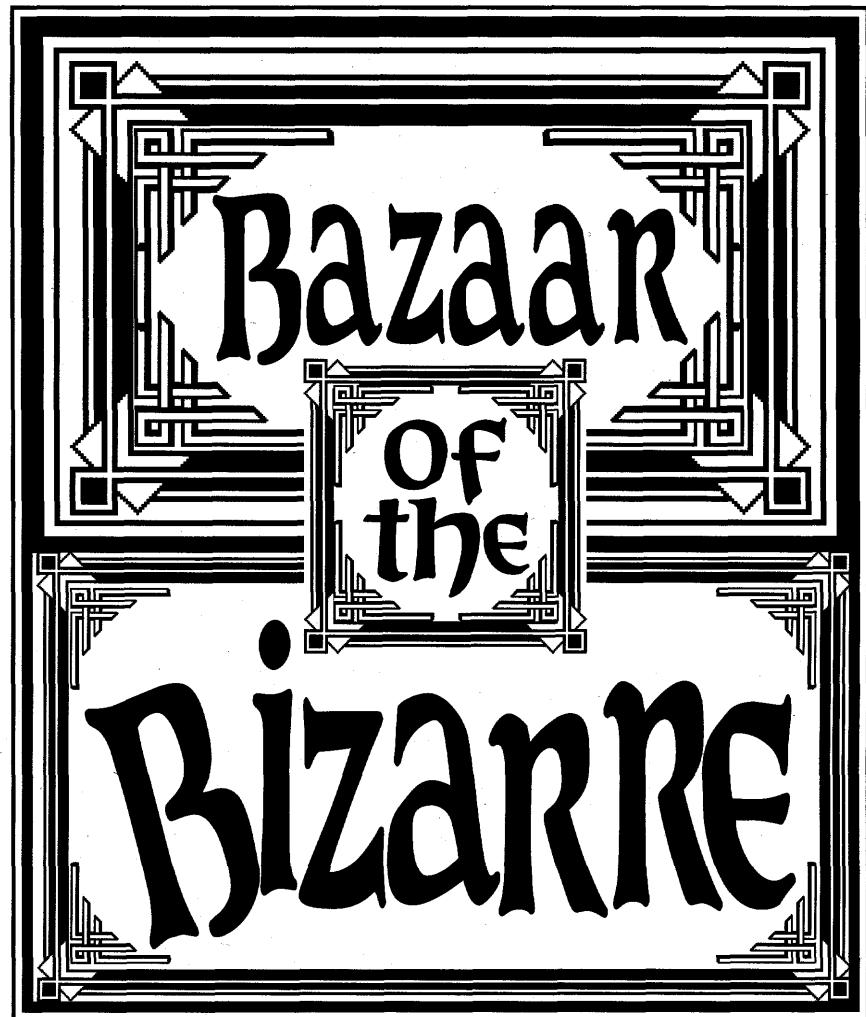
Avian armor

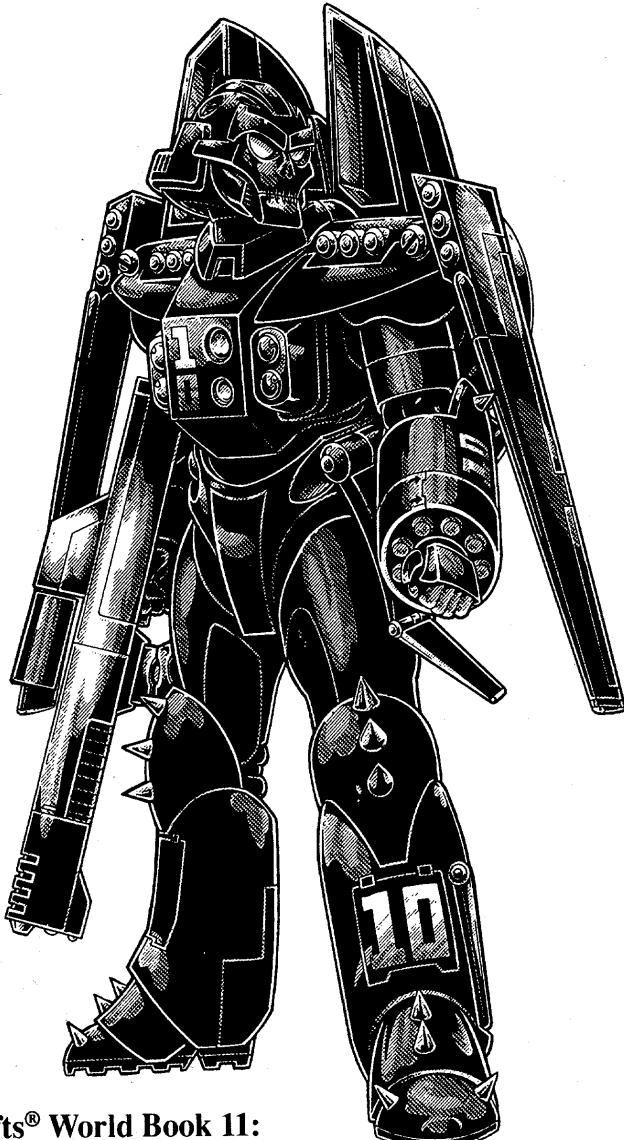
Sometimes called bird armor (or a "chicken suit" by less flattering observers), *avian armor* appears to be leather armor cloaked in thousands of feathers, the colors of which vary according to the whims of individual creators. The combination of leather and plumes bestows AC 7 upon its wearer, but it confers no further protective bonuses. In addition, *avian armor* is impossibly light, and is regarded as non-bulky armor for encumbrance purposes.

❖ *Avian armor* has several abilities which are at the disposal of its wearer, detailed as follows:

❖ The armor's plumage completely insulates the wearer from extreme natural cold and imparts a +2 bonus to saving throws against cold-based attacks.

❖ Once per day, the wearer may transform into any normal, non-fantastic bird. This includes a bird as small as a hummingbird to as large as an ostrich. Otherwise, this power is identical to the





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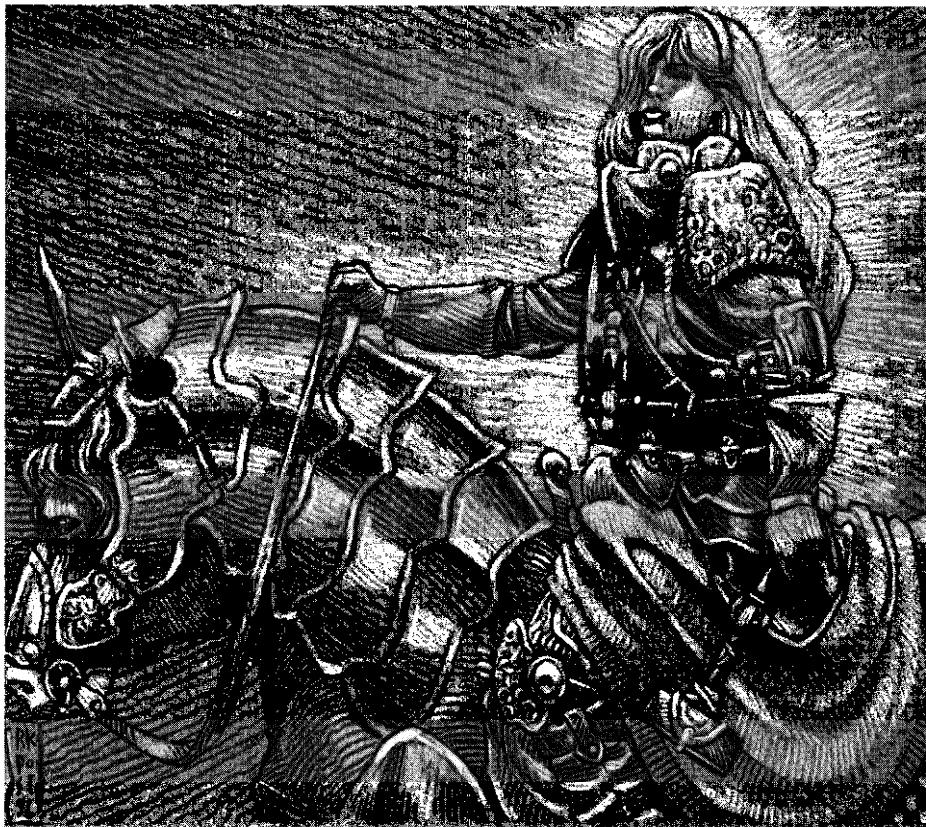
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shape-shifting ability possessed by druids, excluding the healing of damage, which is not gained.

❖ Three times per day, the wearer may fly (as the wizard spell) at the 10th level of ability.

❖ *Avian armor* also possesses several limitations, detailed as follows:

❖ Because of the armor's extensive plumage, the wearer is twice as susceptible to heat exhaustion and dehydration caused by extreme natural heat. Furthermore, the wearer suffers a -2 penalty to saving throws vs. all fire-based attack forms.

❖ The wearer is considered an avian creature when confronted with a magical *flametongue* sword or similar item or effect.

❖ Needless to say, *avian armor* often makes its wearer look quite silly (hence the term "chicken suit"), which in turn causes most observers to have a difficult time taking the wearer seriously, although children seem to like it. Unless the wearer is in the company of bird-lovers, his Charisma suffers a penalty of -4 until the armor is removed.

This armor can be used by druids, but it is of particular use to avian-based priesthoods, as well as to swanmays.

XP Value: 4,000

Armor of Faith

Armor of faith may be manufactured only by priests, including clerics and druids. When created, *armor of faith* is consecrated and dedicated to the religion of its maker. It always bears the alignment of the faith to which it is linked. Thus, if the creator is devoted to a lawful good religion, the *armor of faith* bears a Lawful Good alignment when detected; if the maker is chaotic evil, the armor is Chaotic Evil; and so forth.

Armor of faith may be worn only by those who share the same alignment and religion as the suit in question. If donned by anyone who does not meet these requirements, the wearer suffers 4 hp damage per step of difference between the alignment of the armor and the alignment of the wearer. This damage occurs each round until the armor is removed (the DM must decide how quickly a given suit of armor can be removed), and no saving throw is allowed.

If the wearer follows the proper faith but possesses a different alignment (some deities have followers of different alignments), the wearer is allowed a saving throw in order to reduce the damage by half. Note that this save must be made each round the armor is worn, and any successful save reduces damage only for the round in which the save was

made; full damage occurs each round unless subsequent saves are made.

The breastplate or chest protector of *armor of faith* usually bears the symbol of the faith to which it is dedicated, but not always. If the symbol is present, however, the wearer need not possess a holy symbol, as that on the armor serves the same purpose (e.g., for spell-casting turning undead, etc.).

When worn, *armor of faith* produces an aura that is clearly visible to those of the same alignment or faith. If of the same faith and alignment, onlookers will know that the armor-wearer is an ally and serves the same cause as themselves. If of the same alignment but a different faith, onlookers will know that the armor-wearer is of a similar mind, though this does not necessarily preclude friendship or alliance, as different faiths (even if of the same alignment) may oppose one another. If of the same faith, but of a different alignment, the sameness of religion will be noted by the spectator, though like different faiths of the same alignment, differing alignments within the same religion often implies differences in interpretation of the "holy word," and as such, the armor-wearer and the onlooker may not see things eye-to-eye.

Armor of faith conveys magical protection as per the more common forms of magical armor (i.e., AC bonuses of +1 to +5), and normal protection according to the class of armor it assumes (e.g., leather, chain, plate, etc.).

Obviously, armor of this sort is of particular use to priests, clerics, and druids, and even paladins and rangers, in some cases.

XP Value: 1,000 +500/plus of magical protection

Armor of grounding

Armor of grounding is invariably of the metal sort (e.g., chain, plate, etc.), and it always conveys a magical AC bonus of +2.

When *armor of grounding* is worn, it gives its wearer a unique protection from lightning- and electricity-based effects, including lightning bolts, lightning breath weapons, electrical shocks, and so forth. When such effects make contact with the armor (or its wearer), they are immediately absorbed into the armor and scattered harmlessly into the surrounding environment as static electricity. Note that some creatures (e.g., shockers) collect static electricity in order to perform certain attack modes, and

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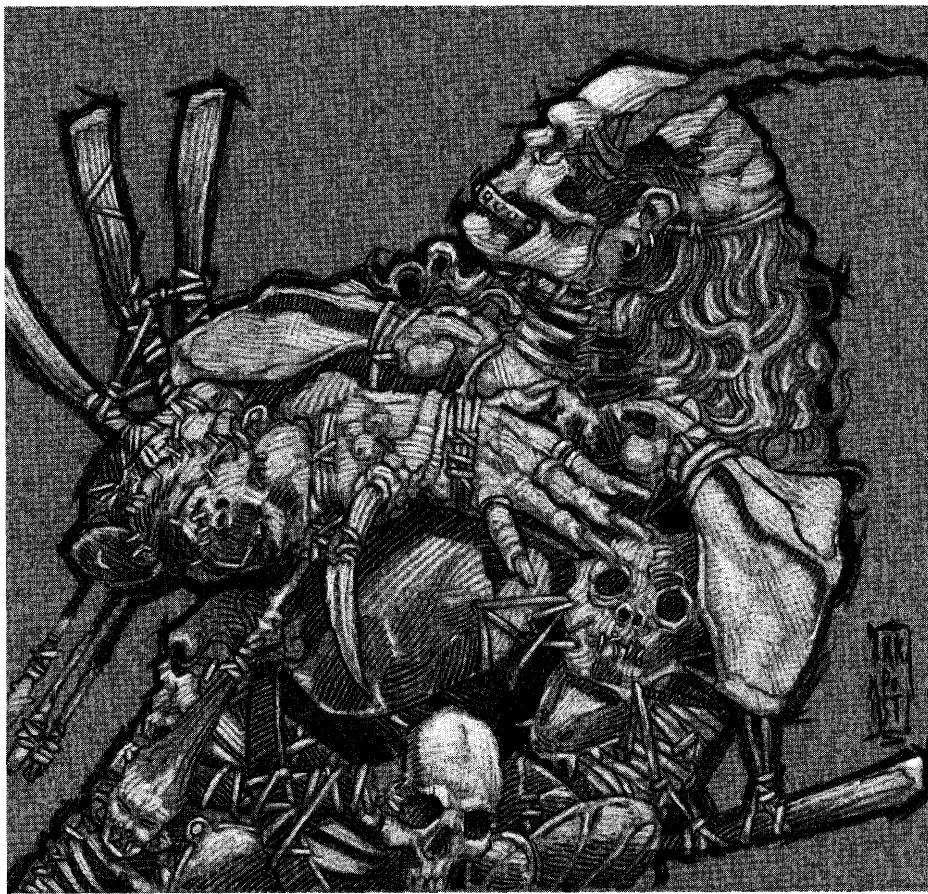
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scattering electricity in this fashion allows such creatures to collect the energy twice as quickly. The wearer of *armor of grounding* has no choice but to allow electrical discharges to be scattered in this manner.

XP Value: 2,500

Armor of swimming

At first glance, *Armor of swimming* appears to be some form of scale mail, but in actuality it is a type of magical leather armor made from the hide of a scaled, aquatic creature. The type of creature is not important, so long as it is scaled and aquatic (e.g., fish, sahuagin, dragon turtle, etc.).

Armor of swimming conveys magical protection up to and including +5 power and allows the wearer to swim as per *gauntlets of climbing and swimming*. The armor also confers *water breathing* (as the potion) three times per day.

Armor of swimming is common among pirates, mariners, and similar ocean-going peoples. Friendly tribes of aquatic elves are known to manufacture armor of swimming as gifts for their land-based allies.

XP Value: 2,500 +500/plus of magical protection

Helms

Helm of horror

Helms of this sort are always of the fully enclosed variety. They are fashioned into the likeness of a fiend, rotting corpse, or another grisly visage. The eye slits shine with a continuous infernal light when the helm is worn. In addition, a *helm of horror* possesses the following powers and effects:

- ❖ When worn, the helm conveys infravision out to a distance of 60' upon its wearer.
- ❖ Three times per day, the helm-wearer can cast a *spook* spell.
- ❖ Twice per day, the helm-wearer can cast a *scare* spell.
- ❖ Once a day, the helm-wearer may cast a *fear* spell.

The latter three powers affect only single creatures who must meet the glowing gaze of the helm-wearer. In any case, saving throws and immunities to fear-based attacks still apply if normally permitted.

While usable by characters of any alignment, *helms of horror* radiate an evil aura, making them quite loathsome to good beings. Paladins and lawful good clerics will seek to destroy them.

XP Value: 2,500

Helm of thought protection

When this helm is donned, the wearer's mind is protected from mental intrusion such as *ESP*, *telepathy*, or similar mind-reading powers, both magical and psionic. In addition, the helm prevents the wearer from projecting his thoughts, so a *thought capture* (see the 1st-level priest spell of the same name in the *Tome of Magic* for details) or similar spell will not work, as the helm-wearer's thoughts do not escape his brain.

The helm is not equal to an *amulet of proof against detection and location* or a *ring of mind shielding*; the wearer is still subject to scrying, charming, magical detection, psionics, etc., and some of these powers could very well be used to coerce the wearer into removing the helm so that his mind could then be probed.

Helms of thought protection are often made of padded leather so that exceptionally paranoid individuals can wear them while sleeping, for the helm also prevents the scrutiny of dreams (which are essentially random subconscious thoughts).

XP Value: 500

Shields

Shield, dweomerbane

Shields of this sort are highly prized by warriors, and despised by most (if not all) spell-users. The reason for these sentiments is obvious once the shield's powers are examined.

A *dweomerbane shield* does not convey to its bearer an Armor Class adjustment beyond that of a normal shield, though it does possess a magical aura. Furthermore, its true powers do not function unless strapped on the arm or held in the hand for purposes of defense in combat situations; its powers do not activate if secured to one's backpack, mount, or elsewhere. When properly used, the powers of a *dweomerbane shield* come to the fore.

If any spell (including spell-like effects and magical item discharges that duplicate spells) is cast into, through, or within a 10' radius of an active *dweomerbane shield*, it is immediately and harmlessly absorbed, even if the shield-bearer is not the target of the spell. This absorption includes partial contact with area spells, as well as contact with a pre-existing spell effects (e.g., a previously cast *barrier* spell).

For every five spell-levels absorbed, a *dweomerbane shield* conveys a +1 bonus to the Armor Class of its bearer. In any

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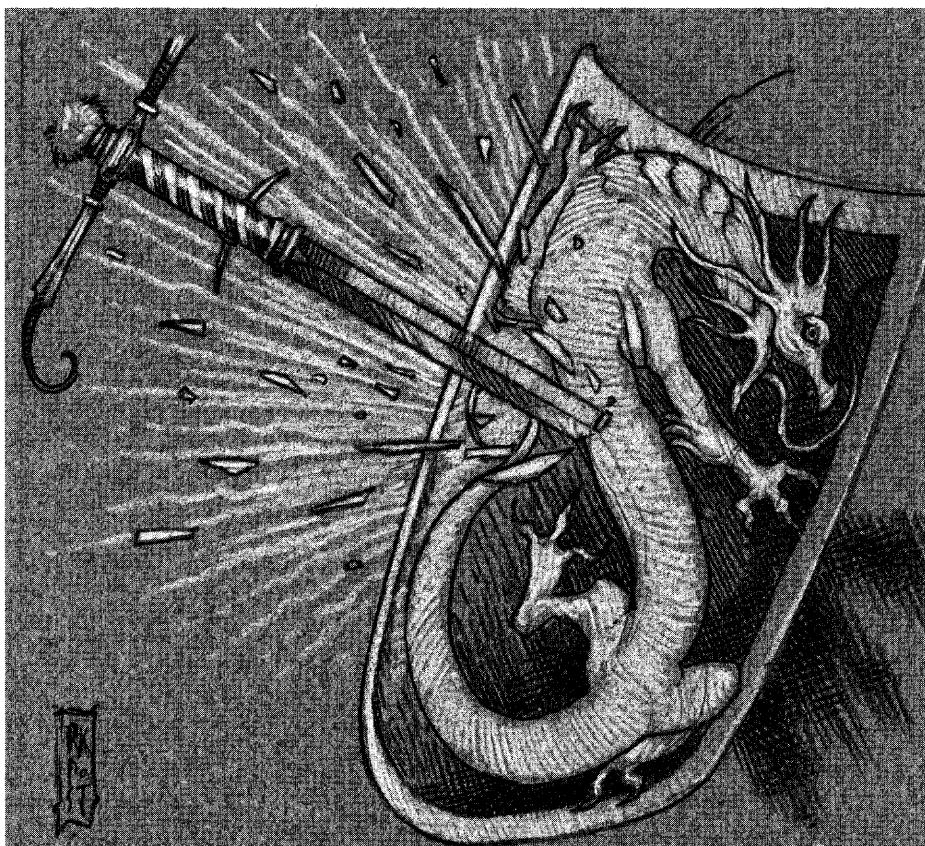
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case, the shield can absorb a maximum of 25 spell-levels (excess spell-levels are lost, and further spells affect the shield-bearer normally), providing defense equal to a shield +5. Absorbed spell-levels vanish at a rate of five per turn.

Note, however, that the absorption ability of a *dweomerbane shield* does not distinguish between potential sources. It devours magical energies from friendly sources as surely as that of foes, including spell effects discharged from the shield-bearer! Furthermore, a shield of this sort cannot absorb magical effects that do not duplicate a spell, and such effects harm (or aid) the shield-bearer as usual.

XP Value: 4,000

Shield of Faith

A *shield of faith* essentially functions as *armor of faith* (q.v.) with regards to abilities and limitations, but it takes the form of a shield. Note, however, that the face of a *shield of faith* always bears the symbol of the deity to which it is dedicated.

XP Value: 1,000 +500/plus of magical protection

Shield of missiles

Shields of this sort appear in as many different shapes and sizes as do other shields. A *shield of missiles* functions as do

other magical shields, offering protection of +1 value to as much as +5 value. However, a *shield of missiles* also possesses the ability to fire a volley of *magic missiles* (as the first-level wizard spell) if the bearer so wishes. The exact number of missiles in each volley, and the number of times per day this power can be employed, depends on the protective ability of the shield, determined as follows:

AC Bonus	Missiles/Use	Uses/Day
+1	1	5
+2	2	4
+3	3	3
+4	4	2
+5	5	1

In addition, a *shield of missiles* automatically absorbs any *magic missiles* directed at its bearer (even if from another *shield of missiles*), which are assumed to be used in order to rejuvenate its powers (though it need not absorb *magic missiles* in order to cast them). No harm is therefore inflicted upon the shield-bearer by the absorbed *magic missiles*.

XP Value: 4,000

Shield of shattering

These shields come in all shapes and sizes but appear to be constructed of an arcane mixture of metal, wood, and stone. Despite these materials, a *shield of*

shattering is virtually weightless and even floats in water or other liquids (it can support 25 lbs. of weight when floating thus). It is entirely impervious to harm, whether magical or otherwise; a property directly linked to its purpose.

When a *shield of shattering* is first created, it always offers protection as a shield +5, though specimens of lesser defense have been discovered (see below).

A *shield of shattering* gains its name from the effects it has upon objects that strike it with considerable force (i.e., enough force to inflict damage upon its user). Whenever an object strikes the shield, it must save vs. crushing blow. If the save fails, the object shatters. In the case of attacks with claws, teeth, tails, wings, or other natural body weapons, the attacker must save vs. death or the limb/extremity is broken. Obviously, creatures such as oozes, slimes, and jellies cannot be affected by a *shield of shattering*. If an object or extremity is broken, the shield decreases one point in protective value (i.e., +5 becomes +4, +4 becomes +3, etc.), hence the existence of *shields of shattering* with lesser defensive ability. If an object striking the shield makes its save, the shield does not lose a plus. However, when the shield's last "charge" is expended, it is shattered along with the striking object.

To determine if the shield is struck, attack rolls against the shield-bearer are made as usual. If the resulting number indicates a miss due solely to the presence of the shield, the attack has struck the shield and must save as above. For example, if the shield-bearer has an AC 2 with the shield, but an AC 5 without the shield, an attack roll against the shield-bearer that would hit an AC 2, 3, or 4 is assumed to hit the *shield of shattering*. Note that for purposes of this determination, the protection of a *shield of shattering* is computed after any other protective effects (e.g., magical armor, swords of defense, etc.).

XP Value: 4,000



Robert S. Mullin has become a frequent contributor to DRAGON® Magazine. Judging by the number of interesting article proposals he has sent us recently he'll continue that trend for some time to come.



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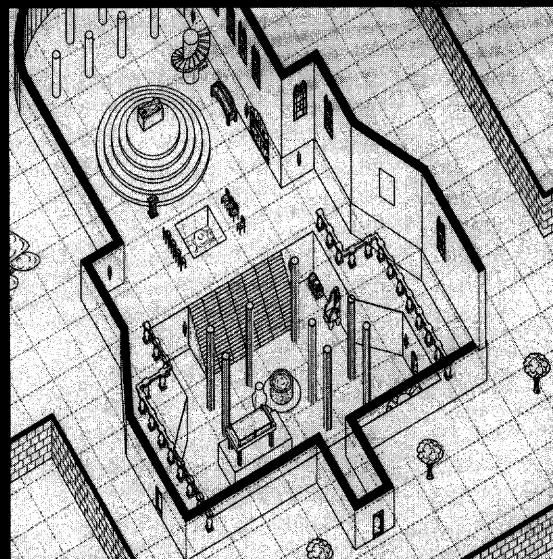
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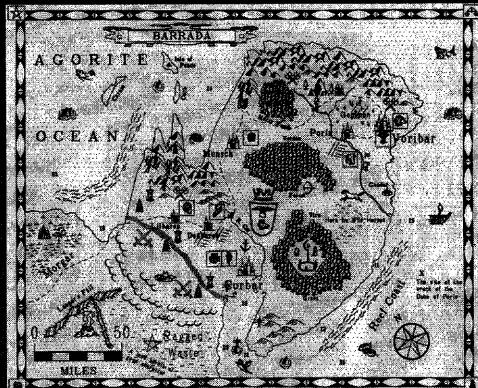
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I would like to comment on several letters in issue #229. First, I agree with Andrew Pearce. Humans should be able to be multi-classed. I have always considered it unnecessarily restrictive that they cannot. The level limits on demihumans should also be discarded. Most demihumans live many more years than humans, so it is expected that they can achieve levels of skill above that of humans. However, given the extra racial abilities that demi-

am sure that you will be able to get some good ideas from professional writers to that age group. It is nice to see an elder sister encouraging her siblings. Keep up the good work, Jessica.

Next, I would like to address the problem of introducing a new player to a group. Many of the problems seem to come from new players trying to introduce characters created elsewhere. The group I adventure with allows only the creation of new characters specifically for that campaign. Imported characters are not allowed under any circumstances. New characters are usually a level behind the lowest existing PC.

lastly, I would like to commend the article by Christopher Byler. Many technological advances have come about to make life easier, allegedly. The same would hold true of magic, as Christopher observes so well. Any DM running a campaign that involves magic, whether it is the AD&D game or not, should heed this article.

Yours Faithfully,

Roger Smith
11 Chedworth Close
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England

I have been astonished, to say the least, at some of the solutions my fellow DMs have proposed to the "problem" of new players. My solution, which has worked nine times out of ten, is to have new players bring in freshly-roiled-up characters at first level. It doesn't matter whether they are experienced players with folders full of characters or whether they've never played before: they all start at the bottom. I adjust the adventures to make sure that the new guys have a chance to contribute. My other

"If we treated the main historical vein, we would have people trying to burn Elminster and all other witches at the stake..."

humans have, there should probably be some sort of bribe to play human characters. One possible method of doing this is in the *PLAYER'S OPTION™: Skills & Powers* book. I would suggest that humans be allowed one free Trait of the player's choice.

Second, a word to Jessica Beals. Why not take a look at some of the literature, films, and TV shows your sisters enjoy? I

players have always been more than willing to help the newbies to learn the laws of the land.

The more experienced characters get a break, because their players know that for a little while they won't be going on quite so deadly missions. They usually take this time to strut, show off a little, and openly reminisce about past adventures. This gives the new guys a chance

to become acclimated and learn more about my world.

On to other matters. I agree with Peter Heyck's letter (in issue #230) about switching the elven subraces around. As to Tim Nutting in the same issue, I agree that if I tried to allow *PLAYER'S OPTION* rules, I would waste a whole session just hammering out rules issues. Therefore, I don't use them at all. The AD&D® rules are quick and simple, which is precisely why it is my game of choice. Different strokes for different folks, I always say.

As for Michael Brock's lament in the letters section, I can only say that the other sections of Faerûn deserve to go unexplored. TSR made the mistake of trying to be historically accurate with customs of the Orient, Hordelands, and Maztica. I felt that I had stumbled onto an issue of *National Geographic* more than an invitation to adventure with their boxed sets. If we treated the main part of Faerûn in the same historical vein, we would have people trying to burn Elminster and all other witches at the stake, the priests of the different religions constantly on crusades to burn or convert the heathen, anyone carrying weapons would be constantly monitored any time he rode into town without a caravan, and thieves would at most have one Fagan-like character and a bunch of young thieves-in-training, no guilds.

All these changes might make for an intriguing game concept, but it wouldn't be the game we all know, which is the most successful RPG going. If these other parts of the Realms had been crafted less with an eye toward history and more with an eye toward good storylines, they would have prospered as the main setting has.

Finally, I agree with Gary Stahl. As a DM, any rule that the PCs have to follow should be equally enforced against the NPCs. Personally, I think TSR should publish only products with NPCs that follow their own rules. If they don't follow their own rules, why should anyone else? I've done away with special "Chosen of Mystra" statuses, spellfire, and any other "special talents" that no PC could ever hope to achieve. I hope that others will chime in and share what they think about these subjects in "Forum" or by sending letters to me directly.

Steve Shawler
3306 Radiance Road
Louisville, KY 40220

I am writing in response to Steven Shaffer's letter in issue #231 on the question of level restrictions for demihumans. The level limits rule can seem nonsensical for many of the same reasons that he brings up, but removing these limits can create as many inconsistencies in a campaign world as will using them. However, implementing some of the optional rules outlined in the *DMG* and employing a little creativity can solve most of these problems.

In general, level limits are treated more like obscure rules that have been included to preserve balance in the campaign than as the reflections of cultural differences between the races. Humans, as explained in the *DMG*, are more ambitious and versatile than demihumans, and their ability to advance without restriction in any class is the product of these tendencies. Elves, halflings, dwarves, and gnomes are assumed to lack the degree of ambition and dedication that allows humans to become so powerful in their chosen class, but there is very little explanation as to exactly how these races differ from humans. If cultural and psychological details are added behind the rule, however, the concept of level limits becomes a great deal more palatable.

Perhaps the elven psyche undergoes changes such that an elf becomes more interested in admiring nature, philosophy, or cultural activities as he ages, while halfling thieves begin to tire of all the excitement of an adventuring life and spend more of their time longing for the simpler pleasures of a snug burrow, a tidy little flower garden, and quiet walks in the sunny fields of their homelands. Dwarves might start to question the value of the glory obtained in battle and think about returning to their clan to devote their time to metalworking, stoneshaping, and raising a family in order to insure that their ancestors will continue to be venerated after their own lives have ended. In each case, these demihumans would begin to neglect their class in favor of these other interests, and their advancement in terms of levels would slow or even stop. Unfortunately, I have rarely seen these kinds of psychological changes effectively portrayed in a PC. On the contrary, most demihuman PCs who reach their level limits continue to be just as ambitious and focused on perfecting their classes as any human PC, and few DMs bother to discuss the psychology behind level limits with their players.

In any event, I don't think that limiting the advancement of demihumans necessarily means that they will be less powerful than humans in any class they choose. An elven wizard normally stops advancing once he reaches 15th level, but if the rule for exceeding level limits with exceptional ability scores is used, an elven wizard with an 18 Intelligence can attain 18th level and cast those coveted 9th-level spells. He will be able to cast only one of these spells each day, but if slow advancement is allowed after that, he can eventually become as powerful as any human wizard. Of course, not every wizard is lucky enough to have an 18 Intelligence, but without it no wizard, human or not, can comprehend the complex formulas required to use 9th-level spells. Advancing more slowly after reaching 18th level does force the elven wizard into a slightly different role, however. In my own campaign world, elven wizards are known not so much for thundering battle magic as for their ability to craft unique and powerful magical spells and items. A human wizard might throw around *meteor swarm*, *prismatic sphere*, and *wish* spells in less time than it takes an elven

wizard to learn such spells, but an elf's long life span provides the time necessary to experiment and investigate problems in magical theory more complex than most humans will ever consider. Elves are known as powerful wizards not because they can tear Orcus' palace apart faster than can a human wizard, but because the elves designed most of the spells that humans are now flinging at each other.

The problem with level limits, as I've come to understand it, is not in the rule itself but in the fact that so few DMs take the time to devise a rationale for these limits in the culture and history of the different races. If this is done, and if the players are encouraged to portray these traits in their characters, level limits can preserve the advantages of playing a human while adding a unique flavor to demihuman characters.

Josh Heckman
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The Rod of Seven Parts, world by world

by Skip Williams

The Rod of Seven Parts boxed adventure officially hits the shelves this month. Though the Rod has been part of AD&D® game lore for years, (see “The Game History of the Rod of Seven Parts” in *DRAGON Magazine®* issue #224) this marks the first time the infamous artifact has played center stage in a product. Long-time fans of the game know the Rod well; it’s been the subject of two multi-part (naturally) tournaments and has bedeviled players in countless local campaigns. The new *Rod of Seven Parts* adventure also marks the beginning of the TOMESTM line for the AD&D game. TOMES products update classic ideas from the AD&D game’s rich past and reintroduces them to new generations of players and game masters; today’s players can tap into the same vein of experiences that old timers share.

Keeping the Rod’s legacy in mind, I created an adventure that could work on any standard AD&D game world. This meant I had to keep certain elements vague so that individual DMs could tailor the adventure to their own campaigns. As a consequence, the boxed set says little about how the Rod’s appearance might affect the world at large, the exact locations of the major events within the adventure, or how the waves of chaos that afflict the world during the course of the adventure might alter the landscape.

If you’ve set your campaign on a world of your own creation, only you

can fill in the missing details. Here are some suggestions, however, for conducting the adventure on some of TSR’s established game worlds. DMs who run campaigns on worlds of their own might find some of these ideas useful, too.

The GREYHAWK® setting

The lands of the Flanaess have long been subject to brooding evils and to extra-planar meddling. After the events of *Greyhawk Wars*, ancient evils dominate the land, especially in the north and west. All in all, The Flanaess is a perfect setting for a quest for the Rod. The GREYHAWK setting also has the twin distinctions of being the land of the Rod’s origin (according to the *Book Of Artifacts*) and the site of many of my own early forays into role-playing games. Accordingly, I had some specific GREYHAWK locations in mind as I wrote the various episodes in the adventure (see the Adventure Summary in Book I of the *Rod of Seven Parts* box for an explanation of what each adventure is all about), as follows:

Night Raiders: Hex F5, 96 northwest of Veluna.

At the Sign of the Golden Cockatrice: The City of Greyhawk (where else?)

Incident at a Footbridge: Any mountainous or hilly terrain; the Abbor Alz or the Cairn Hills fit the bill nicely.

Spelunking: Hex X5, 119 under the infamous Barrier Peaks.

Uninvited Guests: Hex M5, 142 within the Hellfurnaces. (The diplomatic marriage that provides the backdrop of the

Uninvited Guests adventure could signal the beginnings of a new wave of giant attacks on the western and central Flanaess).

Hospitality: Hex K6, 131 at the eastern end of the Dry Steppes.

The Forgotten Temple: Any city but Greyhawk. Somewhere in the Great Kingdom would be the most appropriate. (The temple might have once been devoted to Nerull.)

The Citadel of Chaos: Portals to other worlds abound in the Flanaess, so this portion of the adventure could begin almost anywhere. The ruins of Greyhawk Castle or the Valley of the Mage would be good choices for DMs who want to make their players work a little for the privilege of visiting the citadel.

No matter where the party goes in search of the Rod, it’s a good bet that Iuz and the Scarlet Brotherhood will become players in the drama. As an artifact of law, the Rod poses a serious threat to the chaotic evil Iuz and his plans for conquest. On the other hand, Iuz might also wish to use the Rod as a bargaining chip in some infernal negotiation with the Queen of Chaos. The Scarlet Brotherhood would likewise find the Rod a useful tool for maintaining order in their own ranks and furthering their ambitions for subtle conquest, including using the Rod to help defeat Iuz if necessary.

A group seeking the Rod might also find some forces of Good arrayed against them. Some members of the Circle of Eight, especially Rary, might

question the party's motives in seeking to recover the Rod and might try to keep the Rod from them or to manipulate the PCs after they get it. The more activist members of the Circle, wizards such as Mordenkainen and Tenser, could act as sponsors or advisers to the party. The clerics of Veluna or the Theocracy of the Pale could play a similar role either to the benefit or detriment of the party.

Once chaos waves strike the world, you might want to assume that some of the Flanaess's more notable residents, such as members of the Circle of Eight, Iuz, and other political leaders, might notice the changes. Iuz, being a minor deity, certainly would note the altered landscape, as would the plane-hopping Mordenkainen. To randomly determine whether other important NPCs notice, just roll an unadjusted saving throw vs. spell. If the saving throw succeeds, the character in question remembers how things are supposed to be. Note that anyone not taken in by the changes becomes an alien in his home world, just as the PCs do, and becomes subject to damage each day (see Book III in the *Rod of Seven Parts* box). Note also that folk who are taken in become part of the altered landscape and suffer no damage from the environment. Needless to say, even the most evil NPCs will see the wisdom of sending the Rod on to another world and ending the chaos effects. Specific chaos effects could include:

- ❖ The transformation of the Nyr Dyv into a dense forest. The Rhennee now roam the area in caravans of wagons. The Nyr Dyv remains a dangerous place full of hidden canyons where huge serpents lurk. Enclaves of other dangerous monsters are scattered throughout the forest.

- ❖ The flooding of the Sea of Dust, which becomes a shallow sea of salty, polluted water.

- ❖ The transformation of the Azure Sea into a sea of tall grass where caravans of elephants make their way to the Pomarj and the Iron hills from the depths of the Hepmonaland Jungle, which becomes known for its verdant purple trees and venomous, flying reptiles.

The BIRTHRIGHT® Setting

The continent of Cerilia seethes with conflicts, some ancient, some more recent. The appearance of the Rod of Seven Parts on Cerilia is quite likely to spark a new wave of strife as feuding regents try to seize the Rod and use its

power to further their own ambitions. A Cerillian quest for the Rod should be no sideshow, but a major event in the lives of regent characters struggling to move their domains forward. Possible locations for the various episodes in the adventure include:

Night Raiders: The Five Peaks area has the right terrain for this adventure; however, the adventure is best placed near or within a landed regents territory. The prelude to the adventure is easily disguised as a "monsters" random event during a realm turn; use the most rugged forested area you can find in a low-value province for the actual location.

At the Sign of the Golden Cockatrice: This is a good adventure for introducing non-regent characters to the quest for the Rod. Place the adventure within any large city (perhaps in an "enemy" kingdom's capital). If you're willing to do a little extra work, you could place the events of this adventure into a fair or tournament, where several regent characters are in attendance.

Incident at a Footbridge: This short adventure can take place just about anywhere, but the province value should be low to reflect the adventure's

wilderness setting. A regent who has taken time out from ruling to have an adventure might stumble across Eudora, the adventure's central figure, on his way home. If non-regent characters are involved, you might replace Eudora with the kingdom's court wizard (or make her the court wizard).

Spelunking: The Silverhead Mountains would be a fine setting for this adventure. Tichthys, the adventure's main villain, might have some relationship with the Gorgon, which could pose an additional problem for the party.

Uninvited Guests: Anywhere in the Spearmarsh mountain range would be a good location for this adventure. Once again, the diplomatic marriage in progress here could have serious implications for the neighboring kingdoms.

Hospitality: Aftane or the Tarvan Waste would be good places to set this adventure. If the adventure could take place along a trade route a regent PC has established, so much the better.

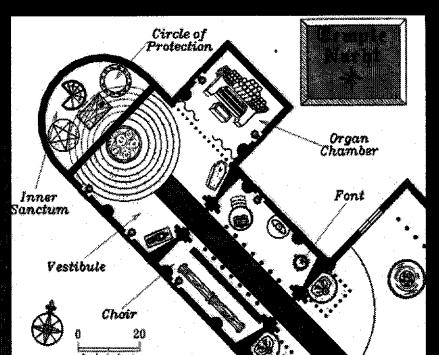
The Forgotten Temple: It would be best to place this adventure in some hostile (or at least suspiciously neutral) city. The temple itself might once have been dedicated to Belnik.

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The Citadel of Chaos: Gates to other planes should be rare in Cerilia, and the PCs should have to work a little to find one, even if Arquestan (an NPC from the adventure) helps. Perhaps the staff at the Royal College of Sorcery in Anuire could provide some information (for a price). The only available portal might lie in an awnshegh's territory, requiring some diplomacy or stealth from the PCs.

Just about any regent could make good use of the Rod, though gaining the enmity of the Queen of Chaos might prove to be more trouble than the Rod is worth. In any event, chaos waves would play havoc with the crucial relationship between blooded characters — especially regents — and the land. This is not merely a matter of confounding the PCs by rearranging some familiar landmarks. A chaos wave represents a blight on the land. Feel free to reassign the terrain that prevails in every province a PC controls. Transformed provinces lose productivity, so reduce the base value of each province and each holding within it by one. If this results in too many holdings in a province, consider all holdings in the province contested until somebody manages to eliminate one. After the PCs send the Rod on, you can restore the original terrain and value to the provinces, but damaged holdings stay that way until rebuilt. It's a good idea to assume that any blooded character remains aware of the changes wrought by a chaos wave. Such characters become subject to damage from the altered environment.

The FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting

On magic-rich Toril, even an item as powerful as the *Rod of Seven Parts* won't have a world-wide impact, at least not initially. Nevertheless, the Rod could become the focal point of a broad power struggle as many different organizations and individuals try to seize it or at least affect its fate. Locations for the various adventures might include:

Night Raiders: This adventure is best placed on the outskirts of an established kingdom, such as Cormyr. The eastern Stormhorns seems a likely site. King Syril (a legendary figure introduced in the adventure) might be a distant ancestor of King Azoun. If so, King Azoun might regard the Rod as a family heirloom.

At the Sign of the Golden Cockatrice: The streets and alleys of Waterdeep could easily hold this adventure, even if the Golden Cockatrice isn't listed in *Volo's Guide to Waterdeep*. The DM could assume the redoubtable Volo simply overlooked

the establishment, or the whole adventure could be moved to a location that is listed in the Guide. Alternately, any large, cosmopolitan city, such as Ravens Bluff, could hold the Golden Cockatrice.

Incident at a Footbridge: This adventure could happen just about anywhere.

Spelunking: The Shadowdale-Myth Drannor area is a natural setting for this adventure.

Uninvited Guests: Any moderately remote mountainous area will suffice for this adventure, the Galena Mountains, for example. Again, the diplomatic marriage featured here could be a sign of larger troubles brewing.

Hospitality: This adventure could take place along a trade route spanning southern Anauroch, or in Calimshan. It also could give the DM an excuse to take the party away from Faerûn for a visit to exotic Zhakhara.

The Forgotten Temple: This adventure could take place in just about any city except Waterdeep. Yulash or one the Moonsea cities would be quite appropriate. The temple itself might have been destroyed during the Time of Troubles and could have been dedicated to one of the evil dead gods, such as Bane.

The Citadel of Chaos: The portal leading to the citadel could be just about anywhere, as portals abound on Faerûn. It's just possible, however, that one of the area's major personalities (see below) might control the portal.

Although Faerûn is no stranger to powerful artifacts, the Rod is sure to create some excitement among the continents many wizards, sages, bards, and cabals. Certainly, Elminster and his allies the Harpers will take a keen interest in the Rod's ultimate fate, as will the Seven Sisters, the Magister, the Cult of the Dragon, the Zhentarim, and many rulers and adventuring companies. Possessing the Rod even for a short time might mean the success or failure of some scheme or another.

The affects of chaos waves should be quite spectacular. Perhaps the Sea of Fallen Stars transforms into a scorched bowl similar to the Death Valley area of the western United States. Perhaps the Moonsea drains into this basin via a thunderous torrent that rages for weeks. The elves of Evermeet might find the sudden appearance of a land bridge from their island to the Sword Coast very inconvenient. Once these kinds of changes begin occurring, its a sure bet that Elminster and company will do the utmost to intervene and reverse them.

The PLANESCAPE™ Setting

Although the adventures that make up the *Rod of Seven Parts* saga are set mostly in worlds on the Prime Material Plane, the City of Sigil could provide a convenient base for a party searching for the Rod. It would be best if the DM places individual sections of the Rod on different worlds. Locating and activating portals to these worlds would provide additional challenges for the party.

The nature of Sigil requires a major alteration to the way the adventure works, because the Queen of Chaos's gate power does not function there. That does not mean that the PCs needn't fear attacks from spyder fiends. The queen can send individual fiends into Sigil to harass the party. Under no circumstances will chaos waves ever affect Sigil, though they could affect any world the party visits.

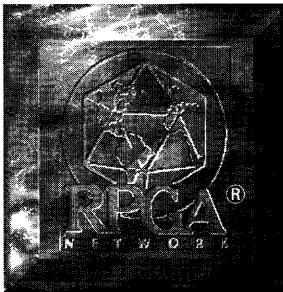
Several of Sigil's factions will become involved in the quest for the Rod. The Fraternity of Order certainly will be fascinated by the Rod's powers of Law. While the chaos factions, the Doomguard, the Revolutionary League, and the Xaositects regard the Rod as completely antithetical to their goals (and rightly so). They'll do whatever they can to prevent anyone from assembling it.

Various lords of the Abyss and Baator would be very interested in the Rod's fate, as it could profoundly affect the Blood War. Though the *Rod of Seven Parts* boxed set says the baatezu's main concern about the Rod is assuring that it's ultimately used to destroy Miska the Wolf Spider, a baatezu army with the Rod at its head could prove very dangerous to the tanar'ri. If the Rod appears in Sigil, especially after Miska is slain, acquiring the Rod as a weapon might become a priority for the baatezu. In a similar vein the tanar'ri will wish to assure that the Rod is not used against them, and may seek it as a bargaining chip to get the Queen of Chaos and Miska involved in the Blood War.

In any case, bringing the fully assembled Rod into Sigil invites disaster, as its aura of fearsome law is likely to disrupt the city so extensively that the Lady of Pain places the wielder into the mazes for his presumption.



As the royal sage of DRAGON Magazine, Skip Williams is no stranger to these pages. Well, no stranger than he is to the rest of us.



Network NEWS

by Jean Rabe

As a few of our more astute readers noticed right away, the "Network News" column from DRAGON® Magazine issue #231 ended rather abruptly. We think if made a rather exciting cliffhanger, but we're too embarrassed to pretend we did it on purpose. In any event, here now is the rest of Jean Rabe's interview with Lou Prosperi, this year's RPGA® Network Guest of Honor at the GEN CON® Game Fair.

Prosperi considers the Game Fair pleasurable and painful. "It's this four-day extravaganza I look forward to with anticipation and dread. I started worrying about this Game Fair in January. I coordinate all the events FASA sponsors. I handle the seminars, the paperwork, scheduling — as well as all the booth demos. So once a week from January on I spend half a day on the Game Fair in some regard. But at the same time, the convention's really a thing I look forward to. I get to meet with all the people I know in the industry. I can talk to my freelance authors face-to-face. I walk around and see what everybody's up to. And I run games. It's work, but I love to run games. It's exhausting but it's wonderful."

He schedules at least an hour a day to chat with *Earthdawn* fans. Many of them ask how to break into the industry. "The first thing I tell them is to be professional. If gaming is a hobby, and they intend to work at it as a freelancer in addition to a regular job, I tell them to treat it as a profession anyway. Get a company's submission guidelines and follow them. Inquire what companies are looking for. Don't try to reinvent the wheel or send a company a proposal on how to fix their game." That only leaves one impression with the company, he added — a bad one.

"It's not easy to get into the industry. I believe you have to pay your dues. And one of the best ways of doing that is playtesting. If you can review a product for a company, offer constructive ways to fix it, offer solutions — well, that shows you have the right aptitude for game design. I encourage anyone interested in the industry to try. We're looking for new authors all the time. People play the AD&D® game and want to write

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for the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting right away. It's hard to get that kind of job right off the street. Start with fanzines, magazines. I know a number of people who got into the industry by starting with *DUNGEON® Adventures*. The RPGA Network is another good place. And writing *Earthdawn* tournaments is an excellent way to begin. A couple of my authors started that way," he added. "And I tell people not to give up. If a career in gaming is what you want, do it. Commit to it. Give it your all."



Jean Rabe is a freelance novelist and game designer, as well as the former RPGA® Network coordinator.

For more information about the Network's programs, write to: RPGA Network, 201 Sheridan Springs Rd., Lake Geneva, WI 53147, or send e-mail to: rpgahq@aol.com.

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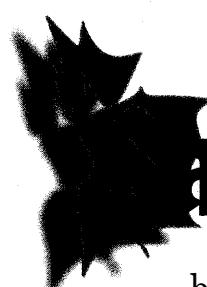
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Sage Advice

by Skip Williams

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This month, the Sage looks at the new *PLAYER'S OPTION™: Spells & Magic* tome and other optional rules for the AD&D® game.

The Spells & Magic rulebook, on page 77, paragraph 3, gives an example that reads: "For instance, a 7th-level Invoker... could choose as many as eight bonus 1st-level spells." Is this a typo? Because according to the Wizard Spell Point Progression table on page 78 (Table 17), it says that a 7th-level specialist wizard can memorize a maximum of 6 spells per spell level.

Table 17 is right; the example is wrong.

Table 30 on page 95 of the *Spells & Magic* book appears to be in error. Although ritual prayer can accumulate only 0, 1, or 2 spell points a round (first paragraph on page 95), the initiative modifiers in Table 30 go up to 29 spell points in the final round of prayer. However, the text on page 95 (bottom of the first column) says only the points accumulated in the final round count against initiative. Which is right, the table or the text?

They both are. First, priests are not always limited to 2 or fewer spell points a round when using ritual prayer. It's possible to accumulate 9 or even 10 spell points a round using the bonuses from Table 31, Modifiers to Ritual Casting Times, also on page 95.

Table 30 goes up to 29 spell points to cover situations in which the DM decides the caster's deity really wants the priest

to cast the spell. For example, *Spells & Magic* author Rich Baker suggests that if multiple priests collaborate in ritual prayer, the spell caster gains one extra spell point each round for each assistant. That is, a caster backed by 30 other priests could gain 32 spell points a round under normal conditions. Every priest in such a group must be of the same faith.

The DM might also grant additional spell points each round for offerings larger than 2,000 gp. For example a priest might gain +5 SP/round for an offering worth 5,000, gp +6 SP/round for an offering worth 10,000 gp, +7 SP/round for an offering of 20,000 gp and so on. Likewise, a priest might get 1, 2, or 3 extra spells points each round if the spell being cast furthers the deity's ethos or is cast to thwart the interests of an opposing deity. For example, if servants of the deity's greatest enemy are about to break into the inner sanctum of the temple, the caster would gain +3 SP/round in addition to modifiers for location, faith, and offerings.

The arrow of bone spell from the *Spells & Magic* book has a duration listing of "special." The spell description says nothing about how long the spell actually lasts. Is the missile enchanted for a certain amount of time per level of the caster? Until it's fired? Or what? Also, do undead or non-living targets get a saving throw against the extra damage the arrow inflicts on them?

The spell's basic duration is one day or until somebody fires the missile; if the character firing the missile misses the target, the spell still ends. Non-living targets gain no saving throw; they just suffer the extra damage.

What is the effect on a necromancer who has both a heart of stone spell (an 8th level necromancy spell from *Spells & Magic*) and has a persistent spell effect optional ability operating on a trollish fortitude spell (a 7th level necromancy spell from *Spells & Magic*)?

I figure that either the trollish fortitude will function minimally, regener-

ating one hit point per round, or that the *trollish fortitude* will attempt to regrow the caster a flesh heart and negate the *heart of stone* spell. What's your call on this one? All in all this is a pretty gross combo. (Almost as bad as the combination of *Otto's irresistible dance* mixed in with a nearby *blade barrier*.)

A *heart of stone* spell completely negates any form of regeneration — permanent, persistent, or otherwise. Nor can the spell recipient benefit from the accelerated healing effects provided by *periaps of wound closure*, *potions of vitality*, or any benefit from other effects that repair damage over time.

Note that the spell recipient also does not suffer extra damage from bleeding wounds, such as those inflicted by a sword of wounding.

How does the mind flayers mind blast power work in campaigns that don't use psionics? Can a character use his saving throw bonus for high Wisdom or Dexterity (or both) to defend against the mind blast? Are there any magical defenses that affect the non-psionic mind blast? For example, can an *antimagic shell*, a wall of *force*, or *globe of invulnerability* stop a mind blast?

A mind flayer's mind blast is a mental attack, and as such the target's Wisdom adjustment applies to the saving throw; Dexterity adjustments do not apply. An *antimagic shell* completely blocks the mind blast, as does a *wall of force*. If the *wall of force* is shaped into a plane, however, the blast circumvents the wall unless the wall is large enough to block the entire width of the mind blast's cone at the point where the two effects intersect. If even a fraction of the cone gets around the wall, the whole effect wins through. A *globe of invulnerability* has no effect on the mind blast.

I'm wondering how to change certain psionic powers from the system used in the *Complete Psionics Handbook* to the MAC/MTHAC0 system used in the *PLAYER'S OPTION* rules. All the powers have special effects when certain numbers come up during the power check. The powers are Spirit Lore, Clairsentient Science: Bone Reading, Clairsentient Devotion, from *The Will and the Way*; and Retrospection (originally a Metapsionic discipline, now a Clairsentient Devotion) from the *CPH*.

If nothing else, some kind of formula for converting would be rather helpful.

Most of the ones that had things happen on specific rolls were changed with the *Skills & Powers* book and new release of the DARK SUN® boxed set, but these seem to have slipped through.

Okay, here's a formula: Subtract the power score modifier from 11 to get a power's MAC. (If you apply this method to powers already converted to the *Skills & Powers* system, you won't get the same result. That's deliberate.) For powers with special results based on the power check result, just invert the table included in the power description. That is, assume effects that happen on a roll of 1 now happen on a roll of 20 and work backward from there.

The formula gives the following results when applied to the powers in your question:

Spirit Lore: MAC 8

19-20	The spirit doesn't know the answer and lies.
17-18	The spirit knows only part of the answer and embellishes the truth, hoping to deceive the psionicist.
15-16	The spirit doesn't know the answer but admits its ignorance.
13-14	The spirit knows the answer but attempts to disguise the truth in deceptive riddles.
12 or less	The spirit knows the answer and gives it truthfully.

Bone Reading: MAC 10

19-20	Deceased's race.
18	Deceased's sex.
17	Deceased's age.
16	Deceased's identity.
15	Deceased's appearance in life and alignment.
14	The date of death.
13 or less	The method of death.

Retrospection: MAC 7

20	Extremely vague and fragmentary.
19	Vague or incomplete.
16-18	Complete but not specific.
15 or less	Reasonably complete and specific.

Do the monstrous traits from the *Complete Book of Humanoids* allow a character to exceed racial ability score maximums? If so, than can a character with the correct traits have, say, a Strength score of 26?

Apply ability score modifiers from traits after applying racial ability score

modifiers and checking the adjusted scores against racial ability score limits. (The racial requirements tables in the *Complete Book of Humanoids* apply after racial adjustments, not before as they do in the *Player's Handbook*.) Once the character qualifies for its race, ability score modifiers from traits can take it beyond racial limits. However, no humanoid character can have a score higher than 24 or lower than 1. Note also that some traits establish minimum and maximum scores of their own. If a character exceeds or falls short of a trait's minimum or maximum, adjust the ability score in question to match the new limit.

For example, a player rolls up a lizard man character with the following scores: Strength 17, Dexterity 4, Constitution 13, Wisdom 10, and Charisma 14. There are no racial modifiers to apply. However, the character's ability scores fall within racial limits anyway. Now, the player must apply trait modifiers. As a lizard man, the character automatically has the monstrous appearance, bestial fear, and bestial habits traits. The DM also assigns the character the monstrous Strength 2 and monstrous Dexterity 1 traits. The combined traits give the char-

acter a -5 reaction adjustment (the character started out with a +2 for its Charisma of 14, but suffers a -7 from its traits). The character's Dexterity score rises to 6, which is the minimum for a character with the monstrous Dexterity trait. The character's Strength score rises to 19 by virtue of the +2 bonus from the monstrous Strength trait.

Can you combine a martial art or punching specialization with the close-quarter fighting, natural fighting, or wild fighting proficiencies from the *Complete Book of Humanoids*?

The close-quarter fighting proficiency works with martial arts or punching specialization. The natural fighting and wild fighting proficiencies, however, don't work with martial arts or punching specialization.



Skip Williams wryly notes that he is the mysterious "Williams" whose quotes appeared in the article on the DRAGNLANCE® FIFTH AGE™ game in issue #231. [And the editor adds, with much chagrin, that Harold Johnson was the mysterious "Johnson."]

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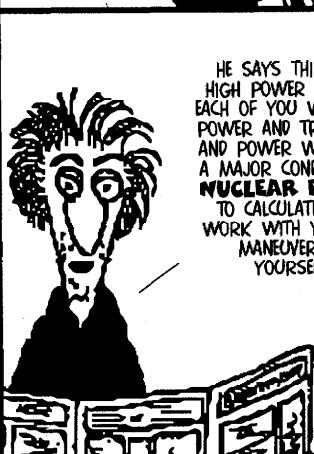
GUESS WHO I HEARD FROM TODAY? JOHNNY KAZINSKI! HE JUST FINISHED THE GAME HE WAS WORKING ON AND WANTS US TO ALPHA TEST IT. IT'S CALLED "WORLD PEACE: THE QUEST."

JOHNNY? DIDN'T HE GET INTO DICELESS ROLEPLAYING RIGHT BEFORE HE BECAME REGIONAL MANAGER OF BIG JUICES FOR THE ENTIRE MIDWEST?

YEAH, I WAS PROUD ONE OF US HAD FINALLY MADE IT. A NEW GAME, HUH? WELL, IF JOHNNY WROTE IT, I'M UP FOR IT!

JOHNNY KAZINSKI? I TAKE IT HE'S AN OLD MEMBER OF YOUR GROUP?

JOHNNY WAS THE BEST! HE ONCE DID 426 POINTS OF DAMAGE IN A SINGLE ROUND. HIS CHARACTER SAVED MY CHARACTER'S LIFE ONE TIME, AND I THINK JOHNNY AND I ACTUALLY FORGED THIS SPECIAL BOND BECAUSE OF IT. I WRITE SOMETIMES. LEAVE A MESSAGE ON THE MACHINE AT CHRISTMAS. YEP. GOOD GUY.



HE SAYS THIS IS A GAME OF DIPLOMACY, HIGH POWER DEALINGS, AND BRINKMANSHP. EACH OF YOU WILL CONTROL A MAJOR WORLD POWER AND TRY TO ENHANCE YOUR PRESTIGE AND POWER WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY AVOIDING A MAJOR CONFRONTATION OR, WORSE YET, A NUCLEAR EXCHANGE. YOU WILL HAVE TO CALCULATE YOUR EVERY MOVEMENT TO WORK WITH YOUR OPPONENT WHILE SUBTLY MANEUVERING TO GAIN POWER FOR YOURSELF. CAN YOU HANDLE IT?

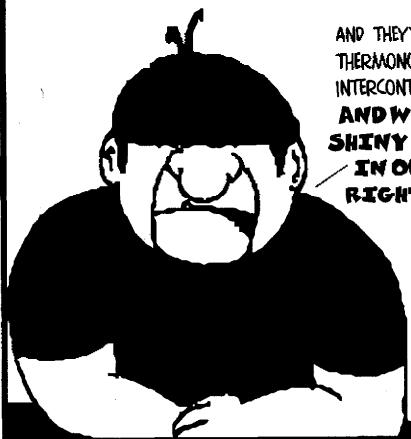
DIPLOMACY AND SUBTLETY ARE MY SPECIALTIES! AM I NOT ALWAYS THE MAIN SPOKESPERSON FOR OUR PARTY?

I MUST SAY THAT I TOO AM A MASTER OF THE SO CALLED "WEAPON OF THE CIVILIZED WARRIOR." WHEN MRS. JOHNSON LOST HER COOL OVER THE OCCASIONAL MISSING NEWSPAPER, I MANAGED TO CONVINCE MY ROUTE MANAGER THAT IT WAS THE FAULT OF HER PET Pekingese.

UM... B.A., MAYBE WE SHOULD STICK TO HACKMASTER.

LET ME GET THIS STRAIGHT. NUKES UNDER OUR CONTROL, RIGHT?

TWO HOURS LATER...



AND THEY'RE FULLY ARMED THERMONUCLEAR MISSILES, INTERCONTINENTAL, MARVED. AND WE HAVE THAT SHINY RED BUTTON IN OUR HANDS, RIGHT?

BOB, AS A RESULT OF YOUR INVASION OF MANCHURIA THE U.N. HAS INSTITUTED A WORLD-WIDE EMBARGO OF YOUR GOODS. BRIAN, YOUR CITIZENS ARE RIOTING OVER YOUR DECISION TO KILL ALL FOOD PRODUCTION AND SCHOOLING IN FAVOR OF INCREASED ARMS PRODUCTION. DAVE, THE COUP D'ETAT IN YOUR COUNTRY WAS SUCCESSFUL. THEY HAVE YOU SUMMARILY EXECUTED AND SUE THE U.N. FOR RE-ADMISSION. SARA, THE PEOPLE OF YOUR COUNTRY HAVE RE-ELECTED YOU FOR A THIRD TERM AND ARE PROPOSING THAT YOU BE ELECTED FOR LIFE.

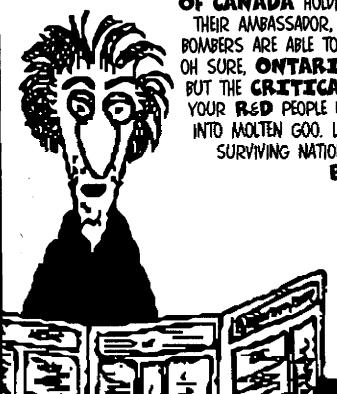
I PLACE MY TRIDENT SUBS ON FULL ALERT AND THREATEN A LAUNCH UNLESS THE U.N. RESCINDS THEIR EMBARGO.

EXECUTED? CAN I SQUEEZE OFF A SALVO OR TWO OF 50-MEGATONS BEFORE THEY GET TO ME?

I PUBLICLY ANNOUNCE MY SUPPORT OF THE U.N.

I'M MOBILIZING ALL FORCES. THAT GIVES ME A ROLL ON THE RIOT SUPPRESSION TABLE AT +80.

LATER...



WHILE YOU DISTRACT THE SOVIET REPUBLIC OF CANADA HOLDING BOGUS PEACE TALKS WITH THEIR AMBASSADOR, YOUR LONG-RANGE STEALTH BOMBERS ARE ABLE TO PENETRATE THEIR RADAR-NET. OH, SURE, ONTARIO PUTS UP A VALIANT FIGHT BUT THE CRITICAL-HIT NUKES YOU HAD YOUR RED PEOPLE DEVELOP TURNS THE PROVINCE INTO MOLTEN GOO. LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE THE LAST SURVIVING NATION WITH NUKE CAPABILITY. BRIAN.

AND TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTION, BRIAN, THERE ARE NO EXPERIENCE POINTS FOR BODY COUNTS IN THIS GAME. THE VICTORY CONDITIONS ARE BASED ON THE PLAYER'S ABILITY TO USHER IN CHANGES AND INFLUENCE OTHERS WITHOUT THE FORCE OF ARMS. MAYBE THAT WILL SINK IN NOW, SINCE IT'S THE FIFTH TIME YOU'VE ASKED FOR AN EP TOTAL.

WELL, WHAT'S THE POINT IN PLAYING IF WE DON'T GET EXPERIENCE POINTS? WHAT A GOOF! JOHNNY WILL NEVER SELL THIS GAME.

I THINK IT SUCKS THE U.N. HAD TO STICK THEIR NOSES IN MY BUSINESS AND ATTACK ME JUST BECAUSE I NUDED INDIANAPOLIS.

WHEN YOU'RE THE LAST GUY STANDING AND STILL PACKING NUKES, YOU DON'T NEED EXPERIENCE POINTS.

Dragon Mirth

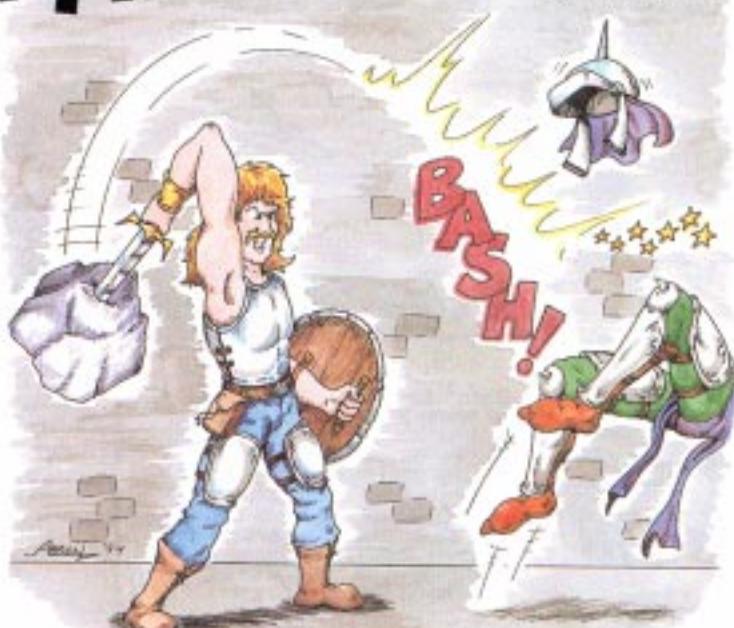
By Aaron Williams



By E. B. Wagner

"Congratulations! You've been promoted to Royal Taster! Like your predecessor, you'll sample the food prepared for the Royal Family and guard against poisonings."

E. B. Wagner



By Aaron Williams

Gargon wasn't the chosen one to pull the sword from the stone. But, he didn't let that stop him.



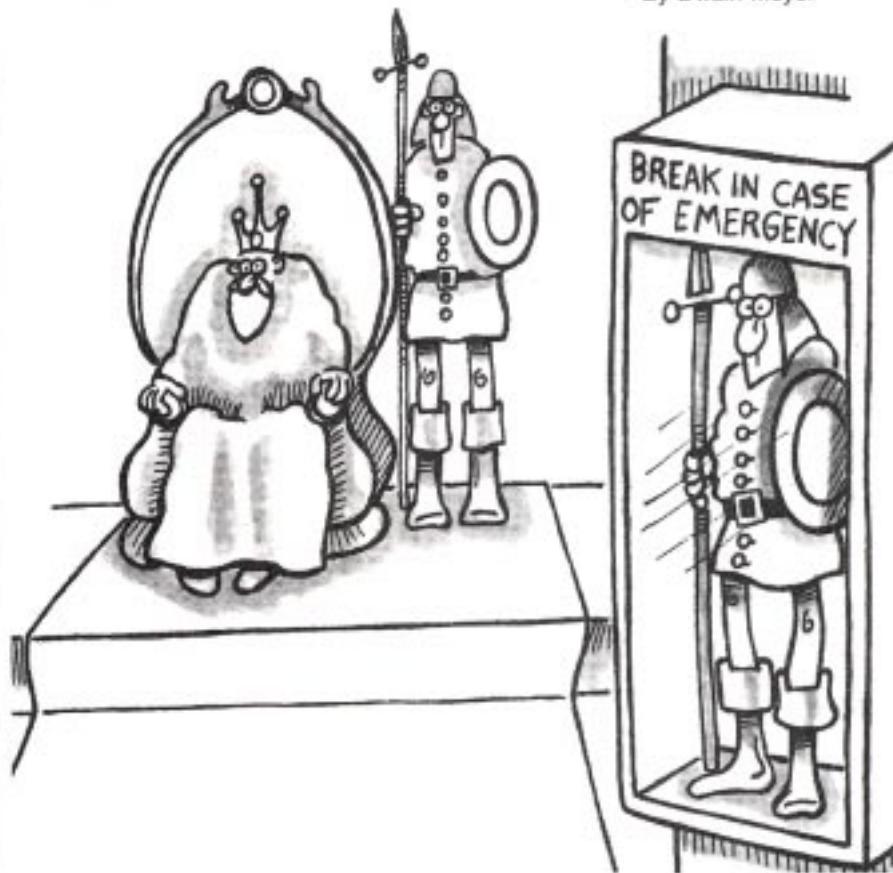
By Matthew Guss

CLUSTER BOMBS...
KITCHEN SINK...
MOUSE TRAPS...
COTTON SWABS, AND
SUN TAN
LOTION.

FINE. MAKE A
NOTE. NEXT TIME
WE BRING A
SHOVEL.



FLINT AND STEEL By Bill Hrenchuk



"LOOKS LIKE ANOTHER CLEAN SWEEP FOR THE KING!"



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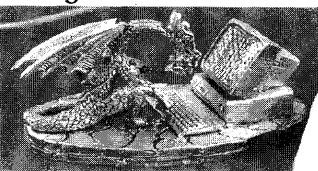


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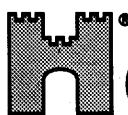
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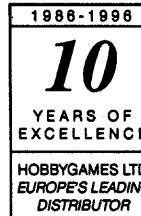


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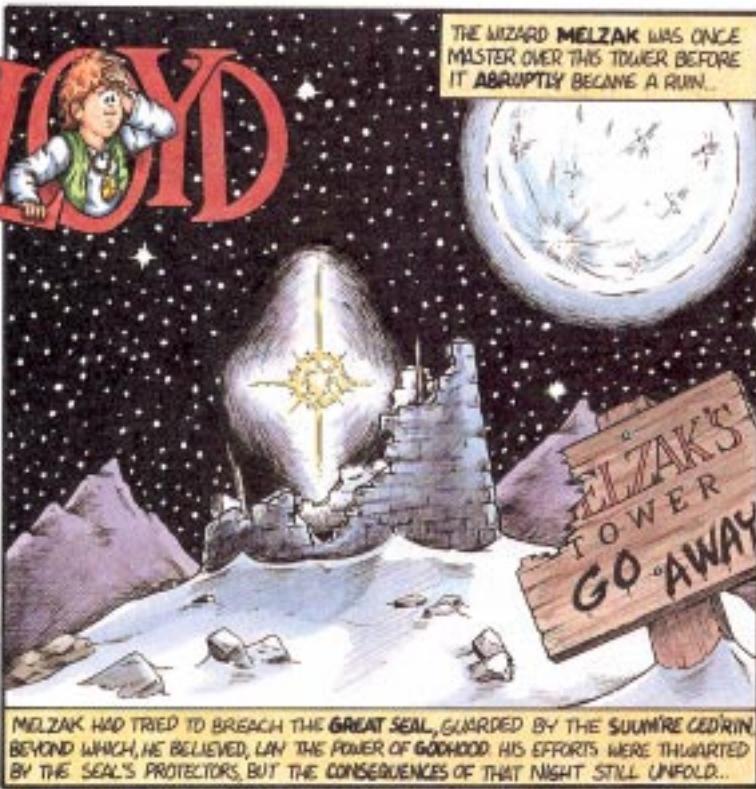
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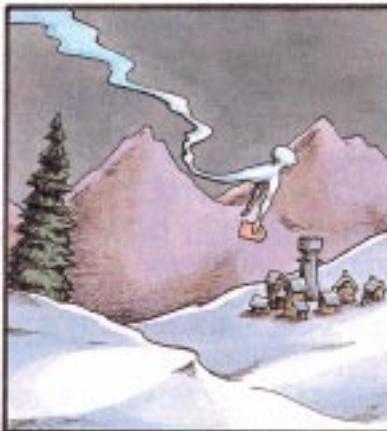
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Written
and
illustrated by
Aaron Williams

THE WIZARD MELZAK WAS ONCE
MASTER OVER THIS TOWER BEFORE
IT ABRUPTLY BECAME A RUIN...



MELZAK HAD TRIED TO BREACH THE GREAT SEAL, GUARDED BY THE SUUMIRE CEDRIN
BEYOND WHICH, HE BELIEVED, LAY THE POWER OF GODHOOD. HIS EFFORTS WERE THWARTED
BY THE SEAL'S PROTECTORS, BUT THE CONSEQUENCES OF THAT NIGHT STILL UNFOLD...

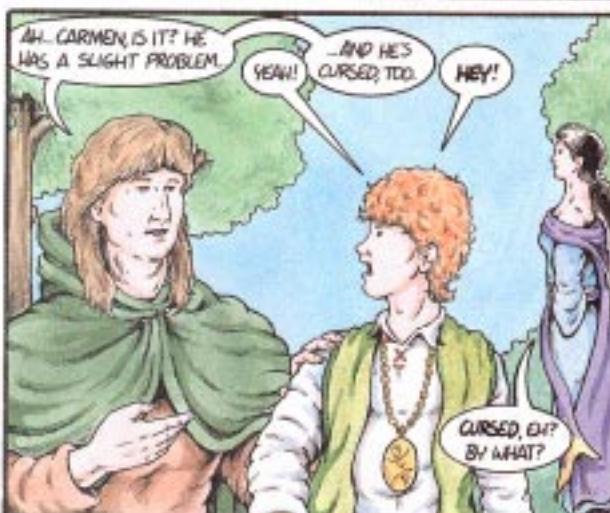




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Role-Playing Reviews

High-voltage campaigns

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The universe has made a horrible mistake. As a result of a bureaucratic oversight, I have been consigned to the status of a lowly human, a mere mortal, when it's blatantly obvious I was supposed to be a god. Or, at the very least, a godling. I'm positive I could solve the world's problems just like *that*, given the proper resources and half a chance. Hey, I already know virtually everything there is to know. Ask my friends. Ask my family. They will confirm that I am, indeed, a know-it-all.

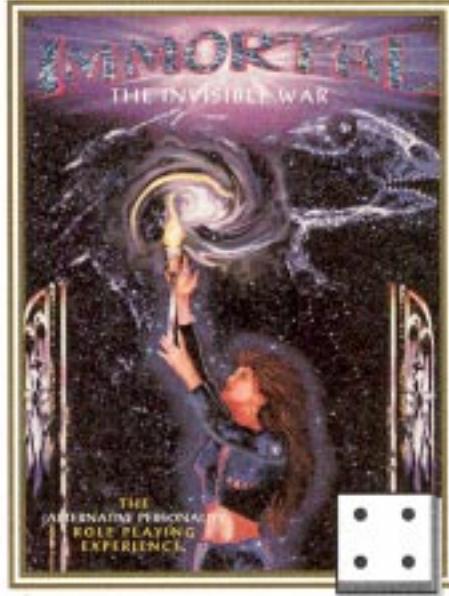
Alas, godhood doesn't appear to be imminent; you know how sluggish bureaucracies can be. So until the universe gets its act together, I'll content myself with role-playing games like the ones under the microscope this month, RPGs that allow deity wannabes like yours truly to sample the lifestyle of the divine.

Of course, actual godhood may be withheld from me indefinitely if I keep making bonehead mistakes like the one I made in *DRAGON® Magazine* issue #230. Reviewing the *Star Wars Customizable Card Game*: I said, "Each player begins



with a 30-card deck, the Light Side player using gray cards, the Dark Side using black.* I got the gray and black part right, but the number was way off. As eagle-eyed reader Mike Mistele of Brookfield, Illinois points out, the rules clearly and repeatedly state that a deck consists of 60 cards, not 30. As tempted as I am to palm it off as a typo, in truth, I was just plain sloppy.

I suppose the universe is gonna hold that against me, too.



*Immortal: The Invisible War** game

296-page softcover book
Precedence Publishing Inc. \$25
Design: Ran Ackels with S. Soerving
Editing: uncredited
Illustrations: Ran Ackels, Dee Beckwith, and Steven S. Crompton
Cover: Ran Ackels

Pilot Pack

Immortal: The Invisible War game supplement
One 32-page booklet, 12 color record sheets, three-panel referee screen
Precedence Publishing Inc. \$15
Design: Paul W. Brown III, David Hewitt, Randy L. Lindsay, and Breanna Van Gries
Editing: Paul W. Brown III and Dave Hewitt
Illustrations: Ran Ackels
Cover: Kane Clevenger

Lost Trinity

Immortal: The Invisible War game supplement
One 128-page softcover book, one 17'x11' map sheet, one audio compact disc
Precedence Publishing Inc. \$20
Design: Ran Ackels
Editing: Ken St. Andre
Illustrations: Ran Ackels and Dee Beckwith
Cover: Ran Ackels
Soundtrack production and composition: David Watson

The Shapeshifters Manual

Immortal: The Invisible War

game supplement

96-page softcover book

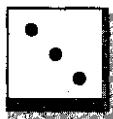
Precedence Publishing Inc. \$14

Design: Ran Ackels and Brianna Von Gries

Editing: Ken St. Andre and Shane Alford

Illustrations: Ran Ackels and Dee Beckwith

Cover: Ran Ackels



Attention, fellow godlings! Although its been around for a while, *Immortal* has yet to attract the audience it deserves, this despite an aggressive ad campaign, a terrific concept, and stellar execution. What's it about? Designer Ran Ackels describes the game as an "experience arising out of Lethe, a state of forgetfulness in which past memories of immortal life have been submerged behind a facade of mortal personality." Further, as "a cast member in the ever unfolding drama of Perpetual Society, you will now take your place in the midst of the Strategem, the political web of intrigue which dominates immortal affairs." Hokum? Well, yeah. But it's high-class hokum, a design of mind-boggling invention and almost unprecedented ambition.

At first glance, *Immortal* looks like warmed-over White Wolf, a not-too-distant cousin of such World of Darkness RPGs as the *Vampire: The Masquerade** and *Werewolf: The Apocalypse** games. For example, both *Immortal* and the World of Darkness rely on overwrought prose; from the intro to *Werewolf*: "Now the Wyrm rises to eclipse the moon, devouring all within its grasp"; from the intro to *Immortal*: There is a symbol, the Null, that represents the eye; with it we shall mark all that is profane." Both assign PCs to groups; *Vampire* has the Brujah, Gangrel, and Nosferatu; *Immortal* has the Arahne, Magdelen, and Eremites. Both present their protagonists as tortured outsiders, soldiers in a secret war; the *Vampire* player characters battle in the endless Jyhad, *Immortal* PCs struggle against the Sanguinary, a malicious force working for their destruction. But the difference in tone is dramatic. The World of Darkness takes an edgy, even brutal approach in its portrayal of a grim reality. *Immortal* strives for a soothing, surreal atmosphere where violence is secondary to the cerebral. Put another way, the

World of Darkness is as disturbing as a nightmare; *Immortal* is as enticing as a daydream.

The PCs of *Immortal* are unlike any I've ever seen, more like things than people, although they have personalities and physical forms — sort of. Known as Ingénue, the, er, things came into being 65 million years ago, evolving from the life essence of extinct animals. Forming a synergetic relationship with the Sanguinary, the dreamworld entity destined to become their enemy, the Ingénue acquired immortality and extraordinary power.

At the outset of the game, a PC exists as a set of 15 motes of *immaculum* (a unit of energy) and 100 motes of *memory* (a unit of yet-to-be-remembered experience). The player constructs an energy mix — called a *Halo* — from the *immaculum* motes by assigning them to six color categories. Each color represents a different characteristic; red represents intelligence, for instance, and orange represents strength. *Memory* motes can be used to purchase (1) free *immaculum* (which are shifted among the various *Halo* colors at the players discretion), (2) talents (routine skills, like mathematics and archery), and (3) serenades (mystical powers, such as creating illusions and levitating objects.)

In short, an *Immortal* PC is less a flesh-and-blood entity than a metaphysical chameleon. By juggling his free *immaculum*, a PC can adjust his basic attributes more or less at will. Latent abilities may be discovered on the spot; by expending *memory* motes, he can "remember" a skill he didn't know he had. Further, a PC may be tormented by the *Babbler*, an inner voice representing spiritual conflict that can trigger neuroses, delusions, and sensory deprivation. And then you have the *Avatars*, sentient personality fragments capable of revolting and turning the PC into a puppet. *Immortal's* take on the player character is so radical, it's like having your skull unscrewed and your brains stirred up.

Unfortunately, I hit a brick wall when I tried to get the PCs actually to do something. Task resolution involves six lo-sided dice, each representing a different color of the *Halo*. The gamemaster determines a rank number applicable to the task at hand; the more difficult the task, the higher the rank. He also determines the hostile, a rating that corresponds to the PC's relevant *Halo* characteristic. Breaking down a door, for instance, might involve an orange hos-

tile. If a roll of the relevant hostile die equals or exceeds the rank number, the task succeeds.

So far, so good. After all, its essentially the difficulty level system employed by umpteen other RPGs, including the *Conspiracy X** and *Masterbook** games. But *Immortal* muddies the water with jargon-laden rules that border on the incomprehensible. A sample: When playing serenades, any null on the hostile can cause one of the immortal's *immaculum* motes to become tainted." Thanks to the generous number of examples, I figured out most of it — I think — but Ackels could have made life a lot easier by using plain English. Though *Immortal* deserves five pips, easy, I'm docking it a pip for jargon abuse.

Combat is even more involved. Along with hostiles and rank numbers, combatants must deal with initiative rolls, hit locations, and a host of modifiers. The complexities make battles more realistic and arguably more exciting, but they also encourage lengthy combat encounters, which seems to violate *Immortal's* primary themes of self-discovery and enlightenment. Still, thanks to the PCs' strange physiology, *Immortal* combat can be a jaw-dropping experience. Because a PC quickly recovers from all wounds delivered from a distance, he's more vulnerable to clubs and knives than arrows and bullets. He also resists damage from explosions and falls; consequently, he's better off throwing himself out of an airplane than facing an attacker armed with a baseball bat. At the same time, a PC has difficulty metabolizing poisons; a dose of arsenic might debilitate him for centuries, even millennia. And because his power derives from his *Vox*, a mystic link between his brain and his *Halo*, there's only one sure-fire way to kill him: cut off his head.

The game takes place in the contemporary world, although history as we know it has been somewhat modified by the war between the Ingénue and the Sanguinary. The French Revolution, it seems, was spawned by a magical artifact. A struggle among the Eremites catalyzed the outbreak of World War II. The world currently exists as eleven regions, including the *Habitat*, occupied by regular guys like you and me, and the *Blue Air*, an expanse of ethereal energy where deceased Ingénue hang out. An overview of *Nivalea*, a secret city in Antarctica which can serve as a campaign base, sets up an introductory adventure titled "Tool of the Crime."

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Problem is, the introductory adventure is little more than an outline, taxing the creativity of even the most experienced referee. As an alternative to "Tool," I suggest opening your campaign with *Project Looking Glass*, a detailed scenario that not only serves up a fair number of surprises but also teaches the rules to new players. It's basic in the strictest sense; the adventure opens in the actual living room of one of the actual players. Bundled with a gamemaster screen and a pack of character sheets, it's also a pretty good buy. *Lost Trinity*, a series of three linked adventures, mixes political intrigue and supernatural shocks with remarkable finesse. The text sparkles with memorable encounters and characters, supplemented with narration and special effects from the compact disc. As good as the *Call of Cthulhu** game in its prime, though without all the gaudy monsters, *Lost Trinity* is a breath-taker. Not so good is *The Shapeshifters Manual*, the latest *Immortal* supplement, which details the animal powers of favored PCs. The powers themselves are okay — mostly spell-like stuff along the lines of *control fire* and *temperature tolerance* — but an excess of filler (like the I-o-n-g introduction) makes *Shapeshifters* non-essential.

Evaluation: In all probability, *Immortal* wouldn't exist if White Wolf hadn't shown the way. But it's so much fun spending time in a setting this luxurious, who cares if Precedence didn't invent the format? Playing a construct of wispy memories, navigating the spirit graveyards of the Blue Air, doing battle with rogue immortals in the Underworld . . . well, it's an experience without parallel. The only RPG that comes close is Chaosium's *Nephilim** game, and *Immortal* makes it seem tame. Despite the steep learning curve and the mud field of jargon, *Immortal* deserves more attention. Especially from us godlings. (Information: Precedence Publishing Inc., PO Box 28397, Tempe, AZ 85285.)

Warlock of the Stonecrows

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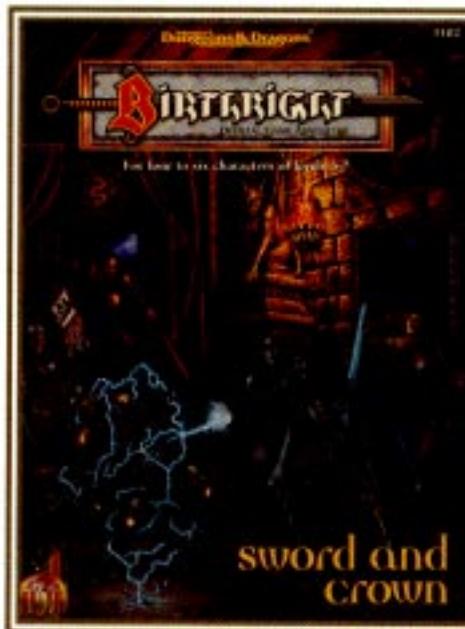
TSR, Inc. \$10

Design: Wolfgang Baur

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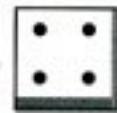
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Design: Colin McComb

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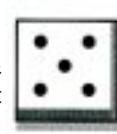
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If you're intrigued by the BIRTHRIGHT setting but have no idea how to get a campaign off the ground, I suspect you have plenty of company. BIRTHRIGHT stands as the AD&D game's most challenging variant to date. Not only do you have to assume the identity of a heroic persona, you also have to function as a surrogate for an entire nation; that is, you're both a player character and a player country. Add a host of tricky concepts — domain actions, regency points, bloodline scores — and you've got a formula for confusion, especially if you're a novice who has yet to master the nuances of saving throws and proficiency slots.

Of course, snobs might sneer that novices have no business fooling around with BIRTHRIGHT in the first place, as it's intended for veteran players who know the *Player's Handbook* inside out. To the snobs of the world, I offer my protruding tongue and a big fat raspberry. BIRTHRIGHT isn't all that tough. You just have to know where to begin.

And what better place to begin than with an official adventure, where the

design team takes you by the hand and shows you what they consider the essentials of a *BIRTHRIGHT* campaign?

Here we have two first-rate examples, *Sword and Crown* and *Warlock of the Stonecrows*, both well-organized, clutter-free, and easy on the brain. *Sword and Crown*, the simpler of the pair, involves the search for a lost princess. The PCs bounce from elven laboratories to slave pens to fungus lakes and face off against an exceptionally nasty adversary called the Spiritrender. Colin McComb, co-designer of the original *BIRTHRIGHT* rules, supplies plenty of staging tips and helpful NPCs — too helpful, some might say. At one point, a bandit conveniently volunteers, "My parents don't know if I'm alive or dead. They're Alain and Miliene Cooper, near the river."

Deadlier and a bit darker than *Sword and Crown*, *Warlock of the Stonecrows* sends the PCs on a mission to clean out the crud in an gloomy citadel. A battle with the orog infantry gives the War Card rules a good work-out. Encounters with a troll priestess and the Cube of Doom lead to a memorable climax starring the Temptations of Greed, Power, and Pride.

Admittedly, neither adventure breaks new ground, relying instead on such AD&D conventions as booby-trapped castles and swarms of bloodthirsty monsters. In fact, they initially struck me as glorified dungeon crawls; where, I wondered, was all the *BIRTHRIGHT* stuff? *BIRTHRIGHT* does indeed ride in the back seat — with a few nips and tucks, these adventures could've taken place in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting — but I think that's the point. *Sword* and *Warlock* are bridges, intended to ease the transition from standard AD&D to the more sophisticated *BIRTHRIGHT* setting. Hardcore *BIRTHRIGHT* players might squawk, expecting something more grand and demanding. But for novices, these modest offerings will do just fine.

With an adventure or two under your belt, you may be ready to get to know the world a little better. Two excellent boxed sets, *Cities of the Sun* and *The Rjurik Highlands*, familiarize players with some of the most interesting regions of Cerilia and provide DMs with ideas galore for campaigns of their own design. Virtually identical in format, both sets feature lavish color maps, useful new War Cards, and well-written guidebooks discussing the history, culture, and personalities of their respective territories.

Cities of the Sun, the more user-friendly of the two, focuses on Khinasi, a land of sunny hills, lush forests, and jungled mountains, populated by an honorable race of artistically inclined seafarers who value scholarship over material wealth. The book also includes a workable system for staging naval battles, with rules covering wind strength, navigation, and shipwrecks. *The Rjurik Highlands* explores northern Cerilia, a region of harsh weather and unforgiving terrain. Populated by hardy, independent settlers, it's a rugged frontier fraught with risk and reward, made to order for high adventure. *Rjurik* tends to favor people over geography — *Rjurik* profiles 16 NPCs, *Cities* profiles only six — and for that reason, I prefer it to *Cities*. But the differences are slight, and you can't go wrong with either one.

Ironically, the best *BIRTHRIGHT* supplement to date, *The Book of Magecraft*, is also the least useful. As it says on page four, "Spellcasters are rare in Cerilia. Though the land teems with magical energy... few know how to access it. And fewer still understand how to control it." Since hardly anybody gets to use it, Cerilian spell lore wouldn't seem to merit 128 pages of attention.

But *Magecraft*'s a winner, a near-flawless performance from ace designer Jean Rabe. It illuminates some of the most fascinating aspects of *BIRTHRIGHT* lore and makes me itch to play a *BIRTHRIGHT* wizard — and I don't care how rare they're supposed to be. Rabe opens with a discussion of the differences between lesser, true, and realm magic, then explains how to locate and protect sources of magical energy. Key concepts — ley line networks, caerbhaighien enchantments, *sielshegh* gems — are defined and analyzed. Notably, Rabe avoids sweeping generalizations and focuses on practical applications; this is a book for role-players, not theoreticians. Thus, we get insightful advice on borrowing power sources (via ley links), using domain actions (including warnings to avoid the Agitate and Contest actions), and acquiring apprentices (which is a good way to make money). With nary a wasted word, Rabe has cooked up a deceptively straightforward, highly readable treatise on a topic I didn't think deserved more than a magazine article.

Evaluation: So if you're a beginner on a budget, what should you buy? First, of course, you need the original boxed set (which, if you're interested, I discussed at

length in *DRAGON® Magazine* issue #224). You also need a few domain source-books; I recommend *Roesone*, *Endier*, and *Ariya* (and if you want the lowdown on 'em all, check issue #229). Then I'd spring for an adventure; go with *Sword and Crown* if you can't make up your mind. A territory set will round out your education. If you're the tranquil type, pick *Cities of the Sun*; aggressive players are better suited to *The Rjurik Highlands*. If you're a seasoned *BIRTHRIGHT* player who already has a campaign underway, you can skip the adventures; instead, consider investing in both territory boxes. Finally, any player interested in Cerilia spellcasting, regardless of his experience, owes it to himself to investigate *The Book of Magecraft*

Short and sweet

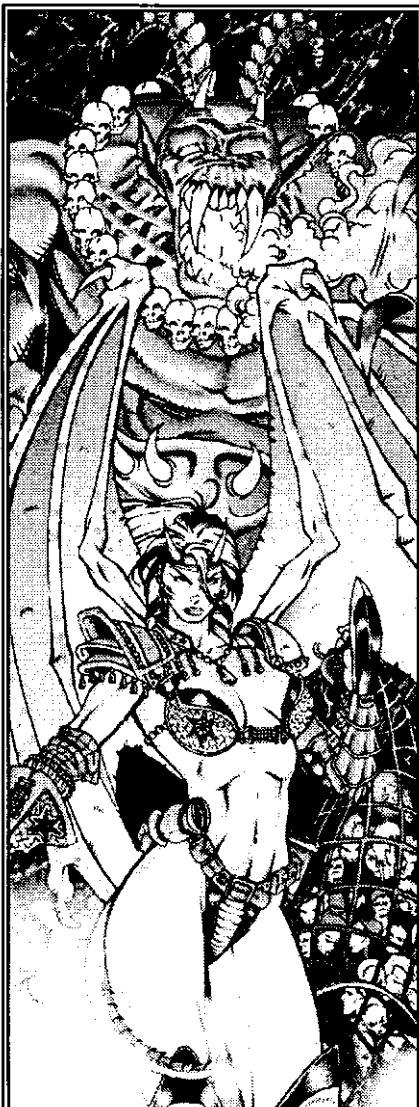
Foxbat Unhinged, by Alison Brooks. Atlas Games, \$8.

GURPS Supers, by Lloyd Blankenship. Steve Jackson Games, \$18.

The super hero genre has fallen on hard times, what with the demise of the *DC Heroes** and *Marvel Super Heroes** games and the suspended animation of newcomers like the *Underground** game. That pretty much leaves the long underwear crowd with two options: the *Champions** game and *GURPS Supers*, the super hero supplement for the *GURPS** game. *Champions*, now well into its second decade, remains the connoisseur's choice, due in part to its elaborate combat system. *Foxbat Unhinged*, from the company that gave the world the twisted *Over the Edge** game, is a brisk action-stuffed adventure that captures the zaniness of early Marvel Comics. It features Foxbat, bad guy supreme, as well as animated mannequins and the too-cool Centipedemobile. *GURPS Super* takes a more realistic route, stressing personality over punch-outs. That's not to say it's stodgy; a typical chapter is titled "Unnatural Multiple Limbs from Another World." The Second Edition streamlines the occasionally awkward mechanics of the First Edition and adds some nifty new powers. And if you tweak a few rules, you can even cook up a *GURPS* version of Foxbat, complete with counterfeit Centipedemobile.

Treasure Companion, by Bob Mohney. Iron Crown Enterprises, \$18.

If nothing else, *Treasure Companion* secures the reputation of the *Rolemaster** game as the most detailed fantasy RPG



INFERNO

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In the Hollows of the Abyss, the great Lords make war. Vast armies clash endlessly over the tortured landscape battling for power and that most precious commodity, souls. Striding like giants among the Hordes, mighty Archfiends and their terrible Lieutenants reap great ruin, slaughtering their foes over and over again, in bloody practice to storm the Heights from which they had fallen so long ago...

Based on Dante Alighieri's classic work, *Inferno* is a fast-paced fantasy miniatures game. It features an elegantly simple rules system that is easy to learn, but with plenty of tactical flexibility. Players take the roles of the Generals of the Abyss, commanding armies composed of Archfiends, Lieutenants and Hordes. Each unit has a unique range of abilities, and armies can be tailored to a player's tastes by choosing the appropriate combination of forces. A wide range of figures are available, in 3 size ranges: Archfiends (55-65mm), Lieutenants (25-35mm), and Hordes ("stands" of 7mm figures). Ground scale is 25m per hex or inch.

The basic game comes as a boxed set, and contains 2 map boards (each 17x23"), rule book, 2 dice, plastic bases, full colour counters and stand-ups, as well as full colour terrain features and templates. As an additional bonus, the Tome of the Abyss is also included (featuring additional artwork and background). MSRP: \$29.95. Another Damned fine game by Global Games.

on the planet. Crammed with charts and lists, loaded with more numbers than a telephone directory, *Treasure Companion* covers every conceivable aspect of magical item fabrication. The Semi-Precious Gem Table, to pick a random example, contains 135 entries. The alchemy section includes 22 spell lists — not 22 spells, mind you, but 22 lists of spells. Does everything make sense? Sony, I ain't smart enough to figure it all out. Let's just say that for *Rolemaster* adepts, *Treasure Companion* is indispensable. For us mere mortals, it's a head-scratcher.

The Thrawn Trilogy Sourcebook, by Bill Slavicsek and Eric S. Trautmann. West End Games, \$25.

This entertaining supplement for the *Star Wars** game compiles, updates, and streamlines all the essential information from *Heir to the Empire*, *Dark Force Rising*, and *The Last Command*, three previously published supplements based on the Timothy Zahn novel trilogy. If you never got around to buying the three originals, your procrastination has paid off. *Heir*, *Dark Force*, and *Last Command* each cost \$18 in softcover, \$22 in hardback. The *Thrawn* compilation costs \$25. You do the math.

The Risen, by Elizabeth Ditchburn and Heather Grove. White Wolf Game Studio, \$12.

Call me an old softie, but I'm a sucker for any cover showing a rotting corpse hauling itself out of the ground. This *Wraith: The Oblivion** game sourcebook explains how to join the ranks of the walking dead, and it's not as easy as it looks. First, you have to find an inhabitable body, preferably one that hasn't been autopsied. Then you have to deal with the frustration of being mistaken for a vampire, detailed in the section titled "The Undead Identity Crisis." And you have to watch your diet; *Risen* with upset stomachs may have to consult the regurgitation rules. An essential guide for the discriminating cadaver. (Uh, can I get a poster of the cover?)

RIFTS Index, by Craig Crawford, Kevin Siembieda, Jolly Blackburn, Kevin Kirsten, and Julius Rosenstein. Palladium Books, \$13.

This overdue supplement for the *Rifts** game features five full-blown scenarios and close to 30 campaign springboards, most of them terrific, a few of them even funny. "About Face," for instance, stars an adversary that's half-skeleton, half-robot. (Hey, it made me laugh.) As a

bonus, a 40-page index logs the appearance of every major monster, weapon, and archetype in 14 previous *Rifts* books. For guys like me who've been whining about the absence of adventures in Palladium sourcebooks, well, now we can shut up.

Insecta* game, by Philip Eklund. Sierra Madre Games/Fat Messiah Games, \$20.

As I write this, it's the middle of a sticky Iowa summer, which is murder on humans but ecstasy for insects. Ants are holding conventions in my kitchen, and mosquitoes the size of helicopters are carrying away the neighborhood children. I say, if you can't beat 'em, join 'em. This bizarre board game casts players in the roles of mutant insects battling for domination of the Hive, their home terrain. As intricate as a military simulation, the rules cover ammunition supply, ranged attacks, and spontaneous mutation. Bizarre? That's putting it mildly. Not only does *Insecta* reward you for dosing your enemies with pheromones, it's the only game I've ever seen that uses a life-size rubber cockroach as a playing piece. (Information: Fat Messiah Games, PO Box 341136, Los Angeles, CA 90034.)



Rick Swan, a former medical student newspaper editor, and hot dog vendor, has designed and edited nearly 50 role-playing products. You can write to him at 2620 30th Street, Des Moines, IA 50310. Enclose a self-addressed envelope if you'd like a reply.

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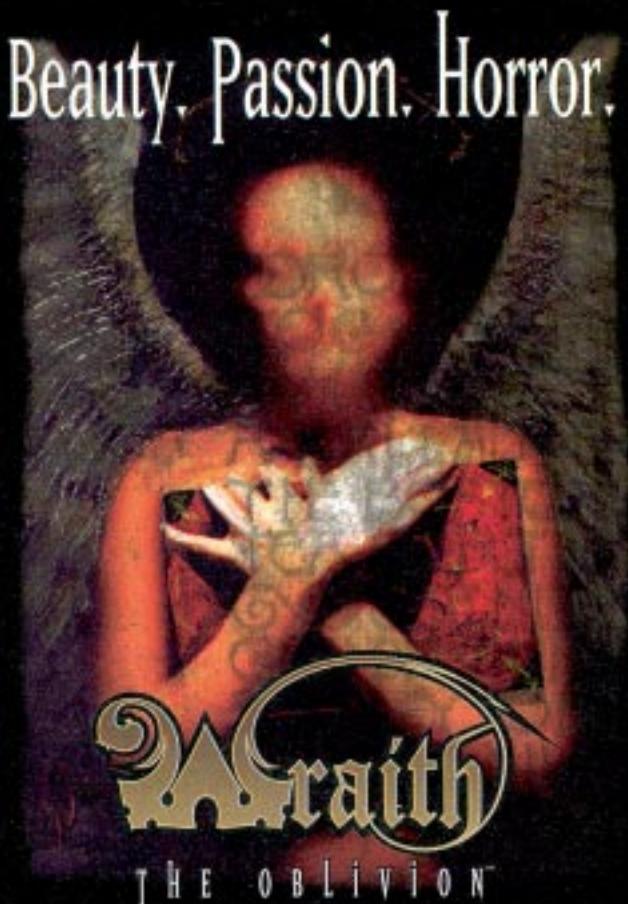
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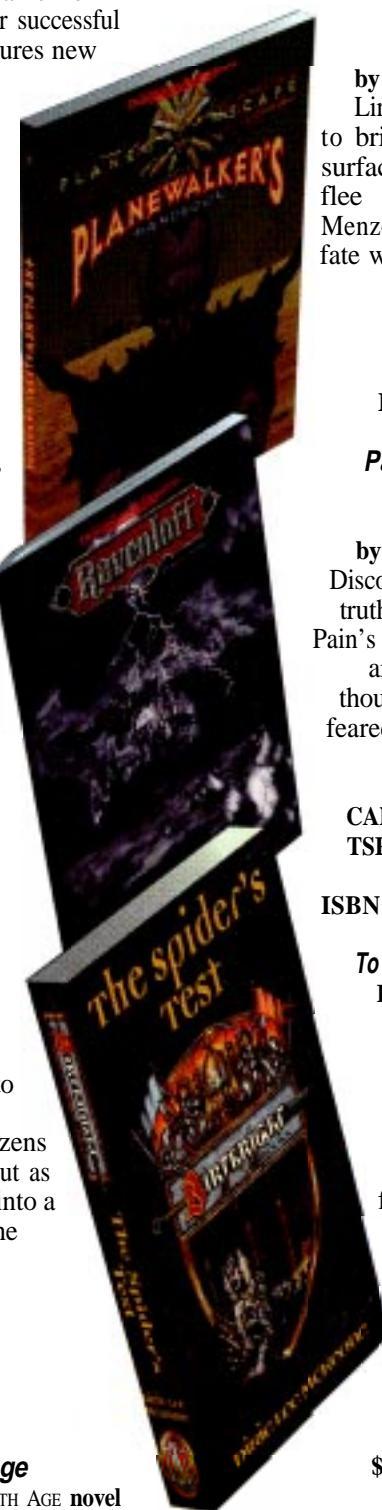
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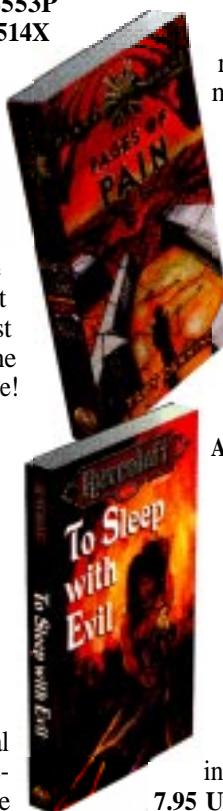
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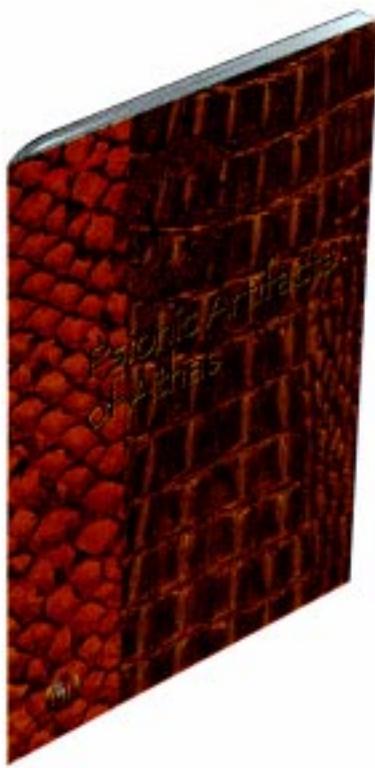
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DRAGON® Magazine #234

Beyond the Grave

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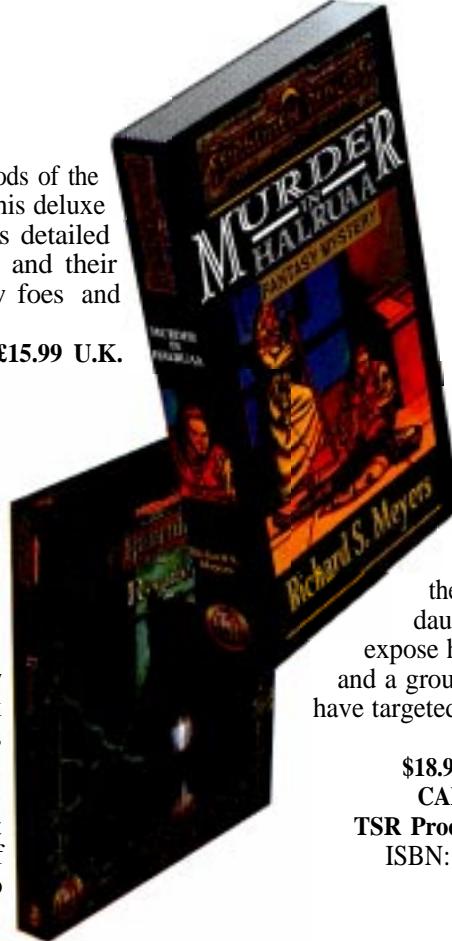
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Continued from page 120

Witchcraft game will cost \$22.95. (Contact: CJCarella@aol.com)

DUNGEON® Magazine has a new editor, Michelle Vuckovich. Michelle has been an editorial assistant and then associate editor on TSR's magazines for almost two years. The magazine department recently hired a new assistant, Lizz Baldwin, whose arrival "should help everything get back to normal within the month," according to *DRAGON Magazine* editor Dave Gross.

The spectacular success of trading card games has brought with it an institution new to gaming: the press junket. A company promoting a new product flies in reporters and reviewers from across the country, puts them up at a hotel, throws a lavish party, etc. SkyBox (Mount Laurel, NJ), previewed its new *Star Trek: The Card Game* at Veterans Stadium in Philadelphia. Reporters received a T-shirt with the slogan "Dammit, Jim, I'm a doctor, not a gamer," and they watched a Phillies baseball game at the stadium after the preview. At this year's GEN CON® Game Fair in Milwaukee, SkyBox plans to bring in actor Walter Koenig, *Star Trek's* Chekov. (By the way, former TSR designer Jeff Grubb co-designed the *Star Trek* game along with Don Perrin and *DRAGONLANCE®* novelist Margaret Weis. Contact: topdogm@aol.com)

On a still grander junketing scale, Decipher, Inc. (Norfolk, VA), publisher of the *Star Wars Customizable Card Game*, promoted the release of its *A New Hope* expansion set with a June cruise on a three-masted ship down Norfolk's Elizabeth River, past the U.S. Naval Shipyard. Decipher even brought in British actor David Prowse, who played Darth Vader in the *Star Wars* movies. Reporters received notebooks, polo shirts, and backpacks embossed with the game's Rebel Alliance logo. "Current Clack" is frankly dubious of the value of such junkets — products based on popular media licenses automatically sell well, regardless of promotion or quality — but hey, the food was great. (Contact: DCustServe@decipher.com)

Freelance writer and game designer Allen Varney also writes regular columns for *Duelist* and *InQuest* magazines. Send news and invitations to lavish press junkets to APVarney@aol.com.



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Origins* convention a success

Over 7,500 people attended the 22nd annual Origins national gaming convention in Columbus, OH, July 4-7. Gamers reported satisfaction with the con's organization and events, and with the Columbus Convention Center (particularly the attached food court). Though some publishers of historical war games had weaker sales than at last year's Origins in Philadelphia, most dealers and publishers reported strong sales — for example, Iron Crown Enterprises tripled its previous Origins sales record.

Origins is sponsored by GAMA, the Game Manufacturers Association. The 1996 Origins convention continues last year's strong rebound after several years of decline. For most of its long history Origins was known for its emphasis on historical war gaming. In recent years this emphasis decreased — or at least was perceived to decrease — as miniatures gamers and some wargamers moved to the East Coast's Historicon. For a time Origins seemed to lose focus, and attendance dropped.

Two years ago the situation began to improve when Andon Unlimited took over management of Origins. Under Andon's direction, Origins has begun to change focus, a trend that accelerated when Wizards of the Coast (WotC), the publisher of the *Magic: The Gathering** card game, bought Andon. The newly resurgent Origins focuses largely on trading card games and board games, with lesser emphasis on role-playing. WotC held the U.S. National *Magic* Championships at Origins.

Next year's Origins will take place in early July at the same site, and prospects are excellent that the convention will continue to grow. In years to come, Andon officials hope that Origins may draw 15,000 attendees.

Origins awards

The second edition of White Wolf's *Mage: The Ascension* RPG won this year's Origins Award for Best RPG, and the

same company's Vampire adventure, *Giovanni Chronicle: The Last Supper*, won Best Role-Playing Adventure.

TSR, Inc., picked up two Origins Awards. The AD&D® BIRTHRIGHT® campaign world won Best Role-Playing Supplement, and the DRAGON DICE™ game won Best Fantasy or Science Fiction Boardgame (a catch-all category that includes frequent non-board nominees).

ICE's *Middle-Earth: The Wizards** game picked up the award for best card game. A *Battletech** game novel by William H. Keith, *Tactics of Duty*, won Best Game-related Fiction. *Shadis* took Best Professional Gaming Magazine, and Best Amateur Adventure Gaming Magazine went to *Berg's Review of Games*, Richard Berg's wargaming newsletter.

Danforth in Hall of Fame: This year the Adventure Gaming Hall of Fame inducted artist and designer Elizabeth Danforth. Danforth is an accomplished designer (two Interplay *Star Trek** computer games and the *Tunnels & Trolls** computer game) and until last year was a part-time reference librarian at the Phoenix (Arizona) Public Library. But she is best known for her beautiful artwork, which has graced many *Middle-earth Roleplaying** and *Twilight: 2000** game supplements, many (perhaps most) products in Flying Buffalo's game lines, and several trading card games, including the *Magic: The Gathering** and *Middle-earth* games. Danforth is now painting art for a *Middle-earth* expansion and WotC's forthcoming *Battletech* card game.

Danforth, who worked for Flying Buffalo, Inc., from 1978 to 1985, joins Buffalo president Rick Loomis and fellow FBI alumnus Michael Stackpole in the Hall of Fame, giving Buffalo by far the highest Hall-of-Famer-to-employee ratio in the industry. Stackpole and Danforth, who have been housemates for years, also have the highest Hall-of-Fame ratio of any private home in America. Stackpole says, "One of our dogs is a champion, too, so there's a lot of pressure now on the other one."

New miniatures rules go online

In another sign of the times, a new set of rules for tabletop miniatures is being made available solely in electronic form, both on disk and on the Internet. Crunchy Frog Enterprises, publisher of the *Star Corps** and *Critter Commandos** games, is publishing its new *Digital Empires** miniatures rules system entirely in Adobe Acrobat format, a means of publishing electronic text so that it looks identical on Windows, Macintosh, and Unix computers.

A "universal" rules system, the *Digital Empires* game covers skirmish battles, mass combat, vehicles (land, sea, air, and space), giant robots, and even magic and psionics. "The construction system allows you to customize stats for any figure you own," says Crunchy Frog president Paul Lidberg. An abridged version of the rules is available for free download from Crunchy Frog's World Wide Web site (www.io.com/~frogs-god/) and from the Download Annex of America Online (users.aol.com/froggod/).

This online rules set follows several earlier moves into electronic form by small publishers. Hero Games (Aptos, CA), whose paper *Hero System** game line recently moved from Iron Crown Enterprises to R. Talsorian Games (see *DRAGON*® Magazine issue #231), has delayed the start of its announced electronic line, Hero Plus. The first Hero Plus supplement, *The Ultimate Super-Mage*, was announced for March but will appear this fall in a three-disk Acrobat version representing 400+ pages of text. (Contact: herogames@aol.com)

Notes from the field

In May Palladium Books cancelled the *RIFTS** *Manhunter* license it granted to Myrmidon Press. Myrmidon will now concentrate on its *Cosmic Enforcers** game line and its forthcoming *Witchcraft** RPG, due in September. Written by Myrmidon Editor-in-Chief C. J. Carella, the 192-page

Continued on page 119

Dungeons & Dragons®



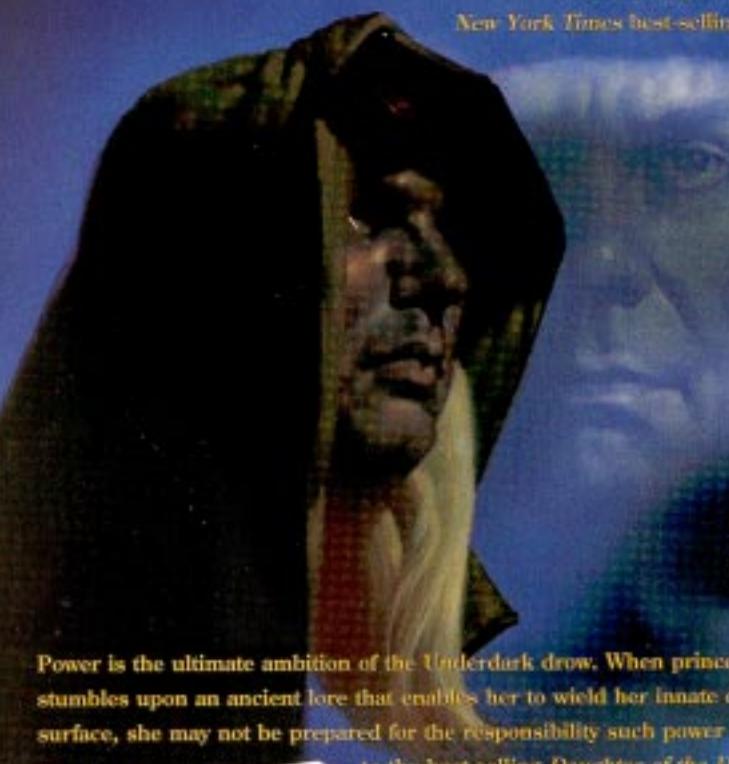
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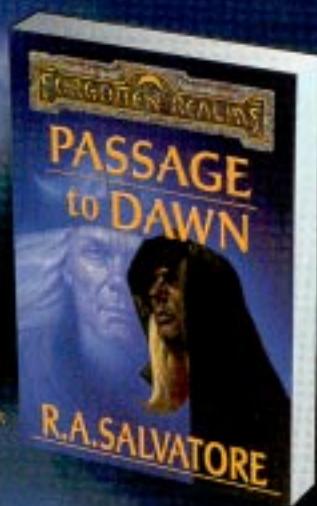
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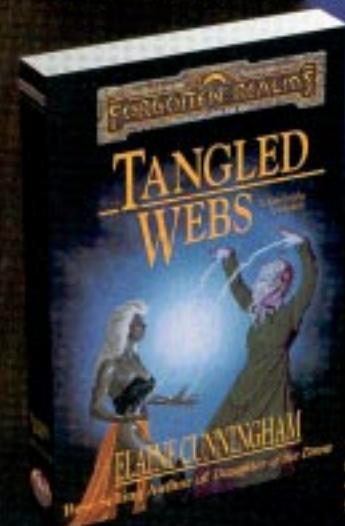
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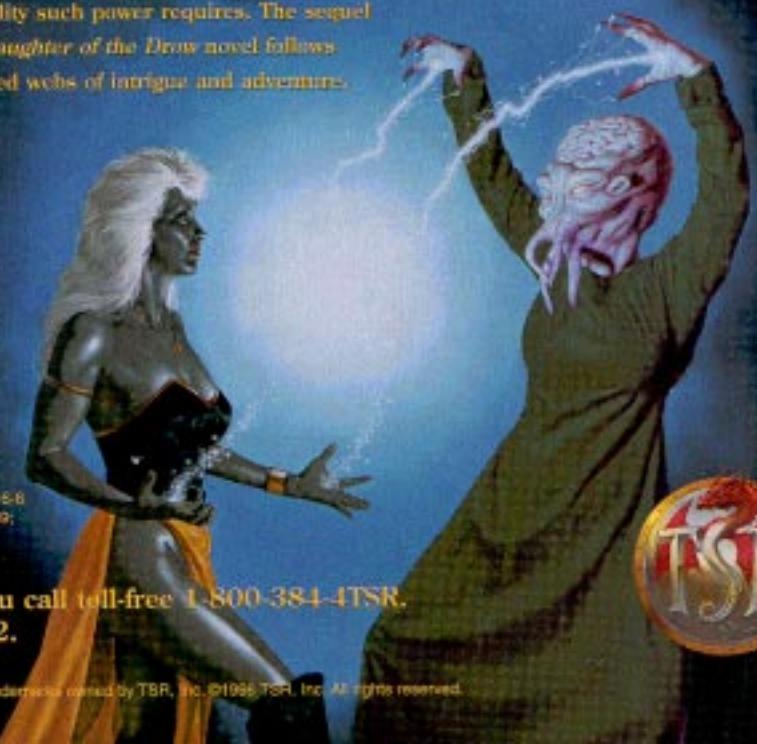
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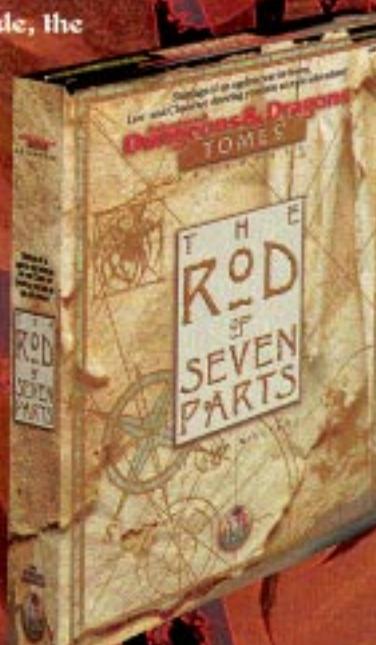
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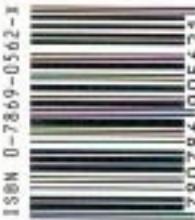


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